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MEMORIAL EDITION

OF

COLLECTED WORKS

OF

W. J. FOX.

VOL. XII.

REPORTS OF MISCELLANEOUS LECTURES

AT

SOUTH-PLACE CHAPEL, FINSBURY.

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REPORTS OF MISCELLANEOUS LECTURES

DELIVERED AT

THE CHAPEL IN SOUTH PLACE, FINSBURY.

PREFACE.

With this Twelfth Volume the Memorial Edition of Works by the late William Johnson Fox is brought to a close. In them the reader will find his best biography, and a noble monument of services—theological, political, literary, and social.

A few facts of Mr. Fox's personal history are given at the end. The Editors had no materials at their disposal, out of which a formal record of his life could be composed; nor, if such materials had existed, could they have obtained the services of any one competent to work them up. This is the less to be regretted because the writings now offered to the public tell their own story of mental culture and moral characteristics.

The Lectures not published during Mr. Fox's lifetime, but contained in this edition, are given partly from shorthand notes taken by a reporter engaged by a few members of the Finsbury congregation, and partly from similar reports which Samuel Courtauld, Esq. caused to be made at his own expense, and with Mr. Fox's concurrence, for several years.

With the sanction of Mr. Fox's daughter, Mrs. Lee Bridell, Mr. Courtauld placed his Ms. reports in the hands of the Editors; and carefully made selections from them have supplied the materials for the "Miscellaneous Lectures" at the end of Vol. X., and for those in Vols. XI. and XII. A few more Lectures of this series might be given at a future time, if a demand should arise for them; and Mr. Courtauld has recently informed the Editors of the existence of reports of five, out of a

course of eight, Lectures on Immortality, which it might be desirable to publish. Of a very large number of Lectures, not inferior to Mr. Fox's best, no records whatever have been preserved.

The Editors regret the delay that has occurred in the issue of the last volumes, but it has resulted from the imperfect condition in which the Lectures they contain had been left, and from the time occupied in the perusal and revision of an immense mass of Mss.

From Mrs. Fox, Mrs. Lee Bridell, and Mr. Charles Fox, the Editors have received valuable aid; and they have to thank numerous friends for assistance in the collection of scattered publications, the verification of some quotations, and the supply of others that were omitted by the reporters—in many cases without any indication of the source whence they were taken.

The duty of editing these volumes devolved, by wish of the Memorial Committee, and with the concurrence of Mr. Fox's representatives, upon W. B. Hodgson, Esq., LL.D.; and H. J. Slack, Esq., F.G.S., Sec. R.M.S. To both it has been a labour of love, and they trust it has been performed to the satisfaction of those who honour the memory of

WILLIAM JOHNSON FOX.

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THE

COLLECTED WORKS OF W. J. FOX.

BEAUTIES OF THE BIBLE.

January 6th, 1839.

A STORY is told of Mahomet, that when he produced the composition which now stands as the second chapter in the Koran—and which I certainly would not take upon me to assert he did not believe to be dictated to him by a diviner inspiration than that of the Jews—he was so impressed by it, that he affixed a copy of it to the pillars of the temple of Mecca, and challenged the poets of the country to disprove, if they could, the divinity of its origin by the production of a rival composition of equal poetical beauty: and we are told that the most renowned poet of Arabia freely confessed the inability of his own power to compete with so magnificent a production, and that the poet became from that time the follower of the prophet.

Whether this story be true or not, it is certain that the poetic genius of Europe might render a similar homage to the Christian scriptures; for in almost all the poetry, in the greatest poetry at least, of modern Europe, we may trace, directly or indirectly, the inspiration of those scriptures and of the power of Christianity. The two great poems of Italy, what are they?—what are the works of Dante and of Tasso, but embodiments of the application of scripture facts and teachings to the form of chivalric enthusiasm, or to that of moral judgment? In the universality and in the aspirations of German poetry, we trace also the spirit of that book which teaches man to identify

himself with whatever belongs to his fellow-man, nay, with whatever exists, and even with Deity—the spirit of that book which first lifted the veil of futurity, and taught man to pant and to aspire after invisible and future blessedness. And in our own land, the Elizabethan writers, who are its pride and its literary glory, and who seem likely to remain so to all coming generations,—what were they but the offspring of the Reformation, of that Reformation which gave the people the Bible in their own language, which popularised the scriptures, which brought the power of oriental poetry into amalgamation with the philosophy and with the gloom of the northern and western regions? We trace it through the whole succession of those who, in later ages, have in some measure sustained, though they have not rivalled, the lustre of their predecessors. We find it even in the works of poets who have written without any recognition of what is commonly deemed scripture truth—who have written, perhaps, with an avowed hostility to what was held as Christianity amongst their fellow-countrymen—but who still have shown in their imagery, in their style, in the train of their thoughts, in the direction and spirit of their compositions, that over them the Bible had asserted its mastery and poured forth its inspiration.

It is, indeed, a magnificent book,—simple and antique, like the granite rock; comprehensive as the boundless ocean; gentle and pathetic as the showers of spring, that, softly descending upon the earth, call forth its first tints of vegetation; and one exercising a pervading influence like that of the spirit of the universe, that unseen operates every where, that

> "Warms in the sun, refreshes in the breeze,
> Glows in the stars, and blossoms in the trees:"—

that is spread around us, and is over us, and beneath us, and that seems to fill the universe with the sense of existence and with the hope of enjoyment.

Whatever may be thought of its antiquity—whatever opinions may, in process of time, arise and displace the opinions of preceding generations—whatever individuals or communities may appear on the earth, giving different interpretations of propositions which are now held as indisputable truth—whatever new modes of exposition may be

applied—whatever fresh canon may displace some particular books, and introduce others—whatever form may be prescribed, either by what is called Christianity, or by religion offering itself under any other aspect which can create division amongst human beings,—still the scriptures must remain the object of veneration, must remain worthy of intense and continuous study, must assert their claim, with all who can appreciate such qualities, to constitute a book of power and of beauty.

The subject I hold appropriate to the present time. We may close the year, as we closed the last, with a retrospect of external events; we can scarcely open it with the anticipation of external events. We are but groping in the dark. It is only the past that has so realised itself as to become the definite object of contemplation. Who can tell what shall be the remarkable events of the current year, whether public or private? who can tell what emotions have to be realised, even in their own bosoms? Most true it is, that we know not what a day may bring forth; nay, when distance sets up something of the barrier to our observations which belongs to the darkness of futurity, we are equally plunged into uncertainty, and equally reminded, from time to time, how narrow is our view, and how liable we are to be taken by surprise in that which may create the most welcome or the most mournful feelings. Only on the last Sunday—at the very moment when we were viewing, amid the other events of the past year, the dealing of death with those whose names are distinguished—I made the remark, that death seemed to harmonise with the general absence of remarkable events during the year, —that he had struck down few of high note, or of those who, from their character or powers, commanded much general sympathy; that the names most conspicuous in the necrology of the year were those of two men, old and worn out, who belonged to the past, who were identified with the past, and who left this world as almost bringing up the rear of those classes with which they were connected, and showing that one state of things had gone by, and that another was coming; and at the very instant when these observations were made, a ship was approaching our shores, was probably within sight of our shores, bringing tidings of a death of a very different description, belonging

rather to the young than to the old, and to states of mind and thought that shall rather mark coming times than past times; for the poetry of Miss Landon, known so well under the signature of L. E. L., is especially the poetry of youth, of juvenile emotion, of juvenile thoughts and associations, and such as is read by the young with more avidity than by any other class: the vessel, I say, was approaching our shores which brought the tidings of her premature death under painful and mysterious circumstances. Peace to her memory! and as years pass on, carrying alike with them those who belonged to the past, and those who seem to belong to futurity, may it still leave those moral impressions upon every heart which should be produced from thus seeing the aged and the comparatively youthful swept away as by a torrent, leaving for futurity only the task of pouring forth its most heartfelt blessings upon those who have done most for the human heart and mind!

In this uncertainty of futurity—in this utter inability to say what may be the course of external events, ever so subject to change—with nothing that can take its place among realities, but past events as to the external world,—what is our course, but to lay hold of that which in itself is lasting? and what more appropriate for commencing the year, than, instead of dwelling longer, as we have recently done, on things which are subject to perpetual vicissitudes, to look to truth, the enduring; to history, the progressive; to love, the immortal and unchangeable?—and with these permanent entities may we not also connect that volume, the beauties of which were announced as the subject of this lecture, the scriptures of the Old and New Testaments—the book which has exercised, through so many generations, its potent sway over the hearts of millions, and which must continue so to act upon humanity while humanity can feel the power of moral truth and beauty?

In speaking of the beauties of scripture, I would by no means be understood as giving any opinion favourable to the selections from different authors that are frequently published under that designation. I believe their tendency to be generally injurious—that they give the young a premature familiarity with particular passages in the writings of our best authors, before their minds can possibly appreciate the entire worth of those passages; and in an isolated

state, in which no mind can fully realise their truth and beauty; for, in history, poem, or biography, this worth must depend very much upon the character into whose mouth sentiments, however admirable, are put; it must depend on the entirety of the work, which it is desirable should be contemplated as a whole before the mind dwells on particular portions of it, and selects those portions from the rest for its contemplation.

There are, no doubt, in the scriptures, and in other books, passages which will bear this selection, which have so much of independent existence, and, in that independent existence, so much of inherent beauty, as may make them intelligible when put into the hands of those who have no acquaintance whatever with the works from which they are quoted. But this is not generally the case: nor would I be unmindful in this lecture of the admonition which I delivered some time ago, when I ventured to give you certain rules for reading the scriptures; indeed, I wish to remind you of the general tendency of that lecture. The directions which I then offered may be condensed into four brief hints: they are, first, that we should read the scriptures continuously; that we should not heed the modern division into chapters and verses; that we should take—not only in such compositions as the Psalms, where their brevity and their comparative independence peculiarly fit them for the purpose—but in other cases, we should take the whole strain and current of the writer's thoughts until he himself came to a pause; in perusing the epistles, for instance, we should not stop short of the conclusion of the apostle's argument, and the inferences he deduces from it; in reading the gospels, we should generally take —and they are by no means too long for one sitting—one entire biography of Christ;—and so of the rest. Only as read in this way, like any other book, can the Bible be properly understood, or its real meaning entered into. Each book should have this fair measure of justice dealt out to it by the reader, instead of taking here a chapter and there a chapter, without any connection whatever; a method of perusing them which gives about as much prospect of improvement to the mind as if one were to have for his library a drama of Shakespeare's, a chapter of Hume's *History of England*, a sermon or two of Jeremy Taylor's, and some of

the controversial works of Wesley and Whitfield, all bound up together, and read indiscriminately—a page here, and a page there—as the fancy of the moment might operate upon the mind of the reader. The confusion, the utter want of perception of the writer's meaning, the total loss of time so spent, would not be more complete in the one case than, there is reason to fear, it very often is in the other case.

I gave, as a second precept for reading the scriptures, that they should be read with illustration, and imaginatively—that we should realise the facts of the country and of the author—that we should not read as if the Bible were altogether what some strangely misname it, a spiritual book, as if there had been no real land of Canaan, or wilderness, or river of Jordan, or Holy Mount, and as if these were only the names of what they call spiritual or religious realities—only typical descriptions of the experience of a converted and christianised individual. If such a theory were correct, why then the Bible might indeed be read in that unrealising way in which it is generally regarded. But those who would enter into it, who would say, So spake the heroes of the Bible,—if their imagination is to conceive of its persons and places as realities,—should endeavour, by such works as relate to the manners and customs and scenery of the East, and to the antiquities of the Jews, to make it all pass visibly and tangibly before them, and make them, as Robert Robinson says in his letters, feel with Herod or Pontius Pilate, as with George III. or William Pitt. In this way, we enter into the wanderings of the patriarchs, and sympathise with the calamities of David. All come home to us in the endurances, the achievements, the lives and deaths, of human beings, men of like passions with ourselves. Were this more generally practised, some strange discoveries would be made by different classes of religionists. They would feel that the patriarchs or the apostles, whom they profess so devoutly to reverence and so implicitly to follow, were in many things uncongenial with them—that, if living now, they would be by no means anxious for the advantage of their society—that they are people of whom, in the living and moving world around them, they would be rather disposed to be shy, on account of their singularity, and the many peculi-

arities which do not correspond with the present practices of society; and they would thus be brought to something like a test of the virtue of the reverence which they profess to feel, of the worth of the submission which they profess to practise, towards patriarchal and apostolic men, whose every written word they regard as endowed with the authority of divine inspiration.

The third direction was, to read the scriptures chronologically and critically, for they spread themselves—the various works in the Old Testament—over a period of something like two thousand years; and, if their order be noted, we may perceive in them the growth of opinion, of religious opinion, of moral opinion—we may trace the progress of their notion of the Deity, from something little better than the tutelary god of a family, or of a tribe or nation, unto the conception of Him who filleth the heavens and the earth, and who ruleth over all the kingdoms of the world. We may trace their notion of morality, growing up from the most childish and simple form, that of direct arbitrary precept, with reward and punishment affixed, until it became the cherishing of a moral disposition, which finds in man's own bosom the attributes to which he must render reverence, and makes him a self-governing being; realising what he practises as virtue, because in that he finds his own conscious dignity, his own truest happiness.

All else, I believe, of moment in the precepts then given may be comprised in the one, that the state of the mind should be prepared for our reading; that as we choose, so far as we have the opportunity of choice, books with reference either to our natural temperament, which is enduring, or in reference to the particular impulse of the hour, so in the scriptures—after gaining a general and comprehensive view of the construction of their books—we may find that which accords with our varying modes of mind, and which, while it serves to gratify those different modes, and to cherish the powers and principles of moral improvement, may also serve as a test of the condition of the individual—may enable him to judge of his present state, and compare it with his past, and with that which he wishes to realise for his soul. We find aids to this in the descriptions of character under circumstances the most free from all external or even from internal observation, when thoughts choose

the channels where they flow, and when actions are spontaneous. We may read the nature of men's religion, and the tendencies of their mind, in what they do at such periods: and thus, while Christ went up into the mountain and remained there alone to pray, the patriarch Isaac walked forth in the fields at eventide to meditate—the poet of our country holds communion with the mighty spirits that have gone before him, and bids his midnight lamp outwatch the stars in the contemplation of their works—the Catholic priest shuts himself up in his cell, and there cons his Missal or his Breviary—and the Calvinist missionary, as we find recorded in the journal which one of them kept, under distressing external circumstances, feels himself very comfortable in reading Edwards *On the Eternity of Hell Torments.*

It is not my purpose to select passages from the Old or New Testament, distinguishing them from the rest as pre-eminently beautiful or interesting; although, if one were to do so, how comprehensive should be the choice! Even to name the different classes of beauty which may be found in that volume would require a long catalogue; and, to glance at a few of the chief of them, there would be, amongst the first, such compositions as those with which the book of Genesis opens,—those strange records of the creation, and of man's first condition, and of the commencement of human society—records which, while they have the simplicity of antiquity, have its obscurity also—which present themselves with mere outlines, or filled up into something of uncouth grandeur, in which, by the diligent exercise of our own minds, we may penetrate to a profound meaning beneath, and find the wisdom couched under these antique forms and figures, until we seem to contemplate the inward spirit of a deciphered hieroglyphic, or a mythos that has been explained. Or we may trace other modes of existence, practically quite unknown to ourselves, and yet eminently poetical—alike simple and stern—which, in its humility, was yet capable of grandeur, such as that exhibited in the wanderings of the patriarch Jacob with his numerous flocks and herds; or, in a different way, in Boaz walking in his fields, and watching the motions of Ruth the gleaner; or, again, in a still different mode in the time of Solomon, singing its canticles of delight in the royal gardens of

enjoyment. Or we might at once plunge from these into a different set of interests—into the fierce conflict, the sudden flight, the interposition of descending angels, giants, and divination, and witchcraft, heroic martyrdom and inveterate persecution; and so trace in the adventures of Joseph, of Samson, of David, and of Paul, the poetry of romantic individual adventure. The poetry of the drama is not wanting, as in the book of Job; while in that of Ecclesiastes we have the profoundest pathos, the elegy of human nature itself. Noble productions of the lyric kind are there, and those to which the lyric is the most opposed, the plain and sententious form of didactic composition. While in the character of Christ, and in its attendant circumstances, we find the perfection of moral beauty. In these, and in many other classes of composition that might be mentioned, there is that in the scriptures which may furnish its appropriate nutriment for every mind, and in which every kind of taste and feeling may realise its own useful gratification.

Of what a world of beauty and of poetry have not the scriptures been the occasion! If we may argue from effects to the cause, our notion may well be an exalted one of the power that is inherent in them; for we trace this in the most magnificent forms of architecture that the modern world has realised—in those splendid, and lofty, and capacious, and yet minutely rich and diversified buildings, the cathedrals, which seem in this respect to resemble the scriptures themselves, in conformity with whose supposed dictates, and to do honour to whose Deity, they were erected. We find the poetic power of the scriptures in schools of painting with which antiquity, as far as we have reason to believe, had nothing to bring into competition. We trace it in sculpture, as well as in painting, in the godlike forms of Michael Angelo and in the Madonnas of Raphael. We behold it in the splendour of poetical composition; our *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained* are effusions of a mind in which the power of the scriptures preëminently dwelt, where it was the lord and master, and where its behests were acted upon with implicit devotion. And we meet with it in those peculiarly modern compositions, the oratorios—its magnificence in Handel—its external objects realised by the power of music in the works of Haydn—and its spirit of

devotion, deep and pathetic, pervading the soul and extending to every kind of utterance, in the compositions of Mendelssohn. All these are, as it were, influences growing out from the scriptures; acting upon the world, wherever they find one who has the requisite capacity and genius to be so acted upon; and proclaiming the splendour of the original power by that of its emanations. Any book which does this must be a moral principle and power, a devotional influence, elevating the mind into a state which is properly called religion, raising it above whatever concerns a mere temporary nature, or a low and mean and base character, and bringing it into communion with the spirit of the world, which is God.

I shall conclude this lecture by taking one of the passages which, I think, the most fastidious in making an arrangement of what would deserve to be particularly called the beauties of scripture would include; and taking it with reference to the time—for to-day, you know, according to the old calendar, is Christmas-day—it is old Christmas-day—I shall select what may be termed the vigil of the nativity, from the second chapter of the gospel of St. Luke. The passage which I am about to read begins at the sixth verse, and extends to the nineteenth. After narrating how Joseph and Mary went from Nazareth up to Bethlehem to be taxed, Augustus having sent forth a decree that all the world should be enrolled and taxed, it proceeds thus:

"And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn. And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying,

Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men. And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us. And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger. And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child. And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds. But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart."

Now, in the exposition of this passage, I certainly will not assume its literal and historic truth. The passage is one of which the authenticity is fiercely combated, and of which the literal historical verity might be confuted on grounds more substantial than those which relate to the age of the Mss. But I do not regard it from this point: I take it as a poem, a poem of fact, but one in which fact is adorned with poetical illustration. And what matter is it that this is the case? There is not the less in it of moral truth; there is not the less in it of poetical beauty. In gazing on the statue of some venerated senator whose name had long been a watchword to men in their political strife, who would stop to see, or who would carefully criticise the fact, that the sculptor had given him Roman vesture and adornments, although in real life his own shoulders never wore the toga, nor did his own brow ever wear the laurel? Who would scrutinise, in the "Holy Family" of Raphael, the colour or texture of the garments with which he had depicted Joseph or the Virgin, and enter into a discussion to show that such cloth had not been produced in Israel in the time of Augustus Cæsar, at the exact period when his decree went forth "that all the world should be taxed"? Certainly, the painting by Reynolds, of the death of Cardinal Beaufort, is not the less interesting because no record assures us that a grinning fiend was perceived over the head of the dying ecclesiastic. In these things there is the real truth of history, because there is the truth of the conception, of feeling, and of imagination, and of the associations which the mind identifies with them, and which serve to bring them more thoroughly home, and give them a

permanent place in the galleries of fancy. And so here: I leave these matters out of the question. Take it as a poem. It presents to us Joseph and Mary at the end of their weary pilgrimage, on foot we will suppose, from Nazareth, their native place, to Bethlehem, the city of their great ancestor, there to be enrolled and taxed. They were the offspring of monarchs; they traced their lineage back to David, although they were sunk in poverty, and although Joseph had earned their daily bread by toil as a carpenter. Poverty respects not royal lineage, nor does taxation, it seems; for taxed they were to be, whatever their lineage—and taxed they would have been by the agents of Augustus, had they themselves been as royal as were their progenitors, if such fancy had entered the mind of the imperial despot. There they had to go to fulfil their enrolment, and to pay their tax; and there was no accommodation for them at the inn—no accommodation even in the hospitable East. It might seem that they had more occasion for riches than for royal genealogy; and yet they were rich in their genealogy: and it must have been dear to their hearts—it must have been a source of inward pride, which raised them above many of the privations and indignities of their situation; it was a lineage which carried with it a peculiar promise to the Jewish people—which enabled them not only to look back with pride, but to look forward with hope. It might seem to many an imaginary treasure, but to them it was doubtless a rich mine. When Christ was born, we are told he was laid in the manger. There is a saying attributed to the celebrated American philosopher Jefferson, which but ill accords with the general tone of his philosophy. It is said that once, riding out with a friend, he passed a dilapidated church, to which his friend pointed as a disgrace to the country; but Jefferson replied, that it was good enough for Him who was born in a manger. The speech was assuredly a very foolish one, if it was meant in scorn of him who, at his birth, was laid in a manger. The scorn was ill applied towards one who, whatever the authority of his pretensions or of his mission, still came forth into the world not long after this, while yet a child, astonishing the Jewish doctors by his wisdom. That child, who was laid in a manger, in process of time silenced by his teachings the oracles of paganism—that child overturned the throne of the Cæsars

—that child conquered the largest portion of the civilised world, and, indeed, made the very words civilisation and Christianity describe the same races of men and the same countries and nations—that child has exercised a mental supremacy over the hearts and minds of millions through intervening ages, and still his kingdom standeth strong, and promises to endure for ever. Or was it meant in another sense—that it was not good enough for him? What is good enough for the teacher of truth, for the inculcator and exemplifier of love as the principle of all morality and virtue, for the herald of a hope of immortal being? Good enough for him! not the stateliest churches, not the proudest temples, not royal thrones and palaces; there is nothing good enough, as a shrine, for such a one but the human heart that enters into his godlike teachings, and in itself cherishes his godlike spirit. If, in another point of view, the expression was meant to imply a discrepancy between the tendency of Christianity and the works of human art and genius—if he meant that the dilapidated building was good enough for a Christian temple, because Christianity had warred upon human hearts and mind and genius—why then, I say, Christianity was subjected to a vulgar misconception. However it may disregard these things, if put forth as the means of placating the Deity—however it may throw scorn upon their inherent worth as connected with religion—still, the general tendency of Christianity is to excite the human mind to its amplest development; to bring forth, and cherish to their richest blossoming, whatever of power or of beauty may have its seeds enshrined in the intellect; and thus to carry us on until our being shall be fully unfolded, and humanity shall stand complete, bearing the very impress of Him, the "first good, the first perfect, and the first fair," from whom its origin was derived.

The composition next shows us the shepherds keeping watch over their flocks in the fields by night. The Jewish shepherd is a character that we can only realise by some effort of thought. The oriental shepherd had the simplicity that is commonly connected with our notion of pastoral life: but he was also a warrior: and the shepherd in the East is a warlike character to this day; he bears his sword by his side, or his spear in his hand; he has often to guard

the flocks he feeds. With these flocks, too, he is in a greater degree of sympathy than are the shepherds of European countries; he leads them, he does not drive them—they follow him by the tones of his voice; they know the voice of the shepherd, says our Lord in one of his parables, he calls them by their names; if one of them were lost, we read, he would go through the wilderness, in the midst of darkness and danger, in order to recover it; we hear even of the good shepherd laying down his life for his sheep, and that not as a hireling, not from the sense of duty to another, nor out of regard to his master's interest,—for the shepherd himself was generally the proprietor of the flocks that he thus fed and guided and tended. In their watchfulness, we find that the shepherds were the earliest astronomers; from their own flocks they looked to the moon, called by an ancient poet "the shepherdess of her starry flocks." In their contemplations, they became poets also. One or two of the most beautiful productions of David bear manifest marks of his shepherd boyhood. It was at such a period, most probably, that he wrote, "When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; what is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?" The shepherds retained, even in the season of their country's depression, something of the independence of spirit that had characterised the nation in its better days; and to a few men of this class it is that the poem represents the communication from heaven as made. It was made by a gradation that is very beautifully and distinctly marked. There is first a blaze of light, which they call the glory of the Lord; they would so have termed an aurora borealis. Then they realise a single form, such as they were accustomed to deem angelic, that is, the form of a messenger from God, who discloses to them the tidings of the birth of the promised Saviour; and then the one form becomes suddenly multiplied, and attended by myriads of others, chanting their expressive and noble chorus, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men." Wisely and beautifully is it represented that angels and shepherds—the representatives of whatever was most simple, brave, and yet innocent upon the earth; and the divine messengers from the inscrutable glory of the

Highest—should thus communicate and talk of the commencement of that era which was to establish amongst the nations of the world better feelings and better hopes.

While the rest of the world, the writer tells us, talked much of these matters,—and, in the subsequent events of history, they talked much of them to little purpose,—Mary kept them to herself, "and pondered them in her heart." Thus the events of the youth of Christ were not only forming his own character, but they were maturing that of his mother; they were preparing one of the loveliest beliefs that has ever made its way amongst mankind, and which led at length to the most beautiful idolatry that ever existed,—I mean the worship of the Virgin Mary amongst the Roman Catholics,—that worship by which so much of the grossness of humanity was purified,—that worship by which so much of the fierceness of the ages of chivalry was mitigated —by which the general tone of society was raised—and which stands conspicuous among the histories of divine mythologies, among the records of the different kinds of worship—which stands preëminent amongst them, for its gentle, refining, and civilising power.

We see, in the character of the mother of Christ, the personification and embodiment of some of the best qualities of womankind; we behold her thoughtful, affectionate, reflective, anxious,—and yet ever drawing back from any interference which might impede the course of that Son to whom she looked as one so much greater than herself; braving all things in the persecution which he endured, and taking her stand on Calvary beside his cross. Worthy of all veneration was she indeed by future ages, and worthy, by those who deified Christ, of being called the mother of God!

One might enlarge more on the different particulars in this narrative, all of which, I think, tend to show the beauty of its construction; whether that beauty be the growth of a series of traditions gradually accumulating, and at length condensed in this form; or whether it were really the poetical conception of a single mind, imbued with the spirit of Christianity, and endeavouring, in this form, to show forth his own notion of its truth and worth, of its heavenly origin and its heavenly tendency.

I shall only remark one other circumstance. It was

very likely about this season of the year—it was in winter, the brief winter of Palestine—that these transactions took place; and in looking through the records of external and extraordinary religion, as well as in tracing the course of nature through the year, we find the benediction of Heaven on all the seasons. It was, according to the Jewish legend, in the autumn of the year that Adam was created; and it was beautifully imaginative, that the first action of nature upon the senses of humanity should be at the time when nature was preparing to doff its gaudiest trim—when the changes that indicate the approach of the time of the falling of the leaf, were on the eve of showing themselves—when, with the first lively and strong impression on the senses of mankind from the loveliness of existent being, there would mingle that softening melancholy which belongs also to man's condition, which so well blends with and harmonises with his brightest aspirations, and which contributes so much towards the gentleness as well as the strength of his character. It was spring time that painted on the parting clouds of the deluge the brilliant tints of the rainbow, the token of the ancient covenant,

> "When came the world's gray fathers forth
> To mark the sacred sign."

And it was winter when that child was laid in the manger, who was to be the herald to mankind of a future unbroken sunshine and summer of enjoyment,—

> "It was the winter wild,
> When the heaven-born child,
> All meanly wrapped, in the rude manger lay."

THE STATE IN ITS RELATIONS WITH THE CHURCH.

January 13th, 1839.

The subject of the present lecture is a recent publication, entitled *The State in its Relations with the Church*, by Mr. Gladstone, the member for Newark. I do not purpose, in connection with this work, to go at length into the general question of the connection of Church and State, nor, indeed, to enter into the main purpose of the argument of the volume before me, but rather to make some observations on particular portions of it. The chief topics of my remarks will be found in the first paragraph of the book referred to, in which Mr. Gladstone observes:

"Probably there never was a time in the history of our country when the connection between the Church and the State was threatened from quarters so manifold and various as at present: the infidel, with sagacious instinct, following out all that tends to the general diminution of religious influences; the Romanist, who, in order to erect his own structure of faith and discipline, aims first at the demolition of every other, and who seems in general to deem us so involved in fatal error, that we must pass through the zero of national infidelity in order to arrive at truth; the professor of political economy, who considers this connection as a visionary theory only, and mischievously known by its tendency, when obtruded into practice, to interfere with what he deems the substantial interests of mankind; the democrat, who naturally desires to strip government of all its highest duties, and leave to it the performance of no more than mechanical functions: of all these it was perhaps, on the whole, to be expected that they should unite upon any seemingly favourable occasion to press for their common object: and they have so united."

This is the reason which he assigns for coming forward in defence of the union of Church and State. I should rather have taken this general sense of the grievance of the connection to have been an inducement to consider it indefensible, or, at best, as needing some considerable modification; and I shall go through the different classes of persons whom he has here enumerated, and show, in reference to each, either that he has misstated the grounds of their objection, or that the objection is in itself a valid one, and ought to be taken into serious consideration.

He begins with the unbelievers—"The infidel, with sagacious instinct, following out all that tends to the general diminution of religious influences." Now let us see how the case stands. Unbelievers in Christianity there no doubt are in this country in great numbers. They may be divided, in a rough way, into two classes—the practical infidel and the speculative infidel: by the practical infidel, I mean the vicious man, who shows by his conduct that he has no real faith in religion—who is not guided by the dictates of morality—but who follows the impulses of his being, either in the pursuit of mere pecuniary advantage, or in the gratification of low, gross, and sensual desires. But infidels of this sort are not enemies of the Church—they are not advancing with any hostility against the union of Church and State—they are not to be found amongst those who dissent from or who protest against the faith and worship by law established. Quite the contrary: they swear by the Church, and they stand by the Church; they have the greatest respect for it: their forefathers were buried within its precincts, their children are christened within its walls; perhaps they have connections ministering in its services; they are always reckoned as churchmen, and they pass for churchmen; and if they do not go to church to worship on the Sunday, why, they balance the account by not going to chapel either: they thus stand with society unexceptionably as the friends and promoters, the members and upholders, of the Church, and the advocates of its union with the State also, which perhaps in their hearts they may deem the best portion of the Church. If they live profanely, which may very likely be the case, they endeavour to make amends for it by professing to believe soundly, perhaps having some indistinct notion that the

extent of their professed credence may make up for the extent of their practical aberrations. They sin knowingly. They have made up their minds to enjoy the world, and to repent afterwards; and perhaps they feel much obliged to the Church that, by some of its tenets, it opens to them the way for death-bed repentance, and for making their peace with Heaven in the last few moments of an existence which has, unreservedly, been devoted to the very grossest things of the earth. You will frequently find the most daring profligacy ending in the most submissive superstition—the hope that there is a royal road to heaven, a way by faith and forms, by priestly and church agency, which may enable them to unite things which the wisest have ever deemed to be incompatible. This class of infidels, therefore, is very erroneously put by the author amongst the enemies of the Church: they have not the "sagacious instinct" to which he refers; at least, they only manifest a hostile "instinct" against religious influences in the case of their own persons—they have no such "sagacity" or "instinct" as to society—they have no objection that their own families and dependents should be very religious and moral, because they find that more convenient than that all should be pursuing the same career in life as themselves; and if they do not form the select guard of the Church, they number amongst its camp-followers, and rank as its defenders, not its opponents.

Speculative infidels are of two sorts—the more educated and wealthy, who are also the more subtle and pliable, on the one hand; and, on the other hand, the more honest and zealous, not educated in the sense of the former class, but whose education, so far as they have it at all, is self-gained. The first of these two classes of speculative infidels also belong to the friends of the Church. We find them amongst those who are distinguished by station in society, or amongst those who are distinguished by literary talent and power. Among them are many of the nobles of the land, who avowedly inherit the religion of their ancestors, as they inherit the titles of their ancestors and the estates of their ancestors; they take the whole together as one inseparable lot and bargain; and, valuing much their titles and their estates, they take the established religion with these as an essential concomitant, which they are bound

to profess and to uphold also. And, as to the literary talent of the country, where in that will you find a heartfelt acknowledgment of the faith and worship of the Church of England, and a devout sense of the religious and moral purposes that are to be answered by its connection with the State? You will find there a cold, a formal, an external homage, a sort of compliment paid to the institutions of the country, and which may be due from loyal subjects, or from those who are seeking to cut their way to honour or to emolument by means of their publications; but nothing more: no, not even in the publications that depend most on immediate and even on daily support; for continually will you perceive arguments urged that are entirely at variance with the principles of religion which the Church professes to preserve in its own creeds and forms. You will find in such cases as that of duelling, for instance, that the literature of the country, that its writing power, dares to arraign Christianity and all that the Church holds sacred, when it presumes to interfere with the customs and notions of fashionable life.* And still these are not the enemies of the Church; they manifest no hostility; it is with these two classes that we find its great avowed support: they are for the Church—they are for the Church especially in its connection with the State—they conform outwardly with the Church in all those matters in which conformity is essential to their progress in life, or to any station, legal or senatorial, which they may aspire to occupy. Very likely they exercise some portion, great or small, of the patronage of the Church, and appoint for others teachers by whose instructions they themselves set little store. These are the banded armies by which that connection is mainly upheld in society, on which the Church relies, and of the support of which the Church frequently declares itself to be eminently proud.

The other class of speculative unbelievers are generally self-educated, of honest purpose, of rough and rude minds, and are distinctly and decidedly the enemies of the connection between Church and State. They are so, because they think the creed of the Church untrue, and the influence of the Church intolerant—they are so, because, under the

* In this respect, there has been a complete and remarkable change since the date of this lecture.

direction, and often by the agency, of that Church, they have found their own opinions proscribed, they have found that the publication of those opinions subjected them to inconveniences, to the disgrace of penal indictment, of penalties, and of imprisonments—they are so, because their whole course is one of resistance to the influences which the Church exercises over society—they are so, because they have something of the theological fanaticism of proselytising, because they are desirous, by rallying numbers around the same banner with themselves, of showing their opinions in a more favourable point of view—and they are so, as all persons holding extreme opinions ever must be, because they are most solicitous to establish that freedom of thought and expression in which they have the deepest interest. And in being the enemies of the Church on this last ground, who shall say that they are not justified? who shall say that nature does not plead strongly within them, as it does within others, for the rights of thought and of language? who shall say that any man ought to be contented to suppress his notions, and let the fire burn within him, and not go to his neighbour and tell him that which he has discovered, and call his neighbour to rejoice with him in the ascertainment of truth? It is idle to say that what he deems truth is error. It is in the opinion of him who says so, but not in the individual's own opinion; and he has the common right of human nature to deal with his error as others deal with what they deem their truth. They stand on the same ground, and his title is good to immunity from legal persecution, and also to immunity from that social persecution which legal persecution generally brings in its train by its influence over the opinions of society. It is unfair, as it seems to me, to call this a "sagacious instinct" for the "diminution of religious influences." Intolerance is not a "religious influence"—exclusiveness, proscription, and persecution, are not "religious influences"—the power that spreads abroad in society a disposition to crush any particular set of persons or of opinions, however erroneous they may be, is not a "religious influence." Their "instinct," in this particular case, in opposition to the union of Church and State, is a religious instinct, as well as a "sagacious" one; for their hostility is directed against "influences" that have no title

whatever to the name of the Christianity which they profane.

The next class introduced is that of the Roman Catholics—" the Romanist, who, in order to erect his own structure of faith and discipline, aims first at the demolition of every other, and who seems in general to deem us so involved in fatal error, that we must pass through the zero of national infidelity in order to arrive at truth." The character here given of Romanism is by no means that which a study of history suggests to the mind. The " demolition" of all other systems has never been the spirit and aim of the Church of Rome: it has always shown the opposite tendency; its characteristic is comprehension and inclusiveness, rather than exclusiveness. When there has been an insurgent body of its own bishops and priests, rather than part with them, it has made concessions to them, and granted such boons, to the diminution of its own despotic power, as constituted of old the liberty of the Gallican Church. When there have been superstitions dear to human nature, as it has been moderate towards insurgents in order to retain them, it has been conciliating towards the heathen in order to convert them. The rites and orders of the Church of Rome are made up of what it has tolerated in the heretic, in the unbeliever, and in the idolater. Its priesthood is an incorporation from ancient Judaism, a continuation of the Levitical tribe, with its temple service; some of its forms are merely a transfer of the rites practised by the heathen in Greece and in Rome; its monkery is but an extension of its own sanction to the tendency of oriental speculativeness to retire into solitude, and there to ruminate and become moody and misty; its theory of infernal spirits is but an adoption of old mythologies and superstitions. The Church of Rome has ever gone on allowing, introducing, comprehending; and, instead of showing intolerance towards any that were willing to bow before its own authority, it has made that authority as gracious and as compliant as possible, so that its sceptre were but allowed to wave in dominion over man's conduct, so that its own arrogation of spiritual supremacy were but at least externally accepted. It has even at different times given very significant and very gracious intimations of its readiness to receive back its

erring daughter, the Church of England. And here, then, may we find the real source of the Roman Catholics' hostility towards the union, in this country, of Church and State. The Church of Rome in this kingdom, in this empire, sees the Church of England in possession of its own original property—it beholds that Church rich in the wealth which Roman-Catholic ancestors bestowed on the Roman-Catholic Church—it is naturally irritated, and feels a sense of injustice, that these accumulations, to which itself has a prior claim to that of the Church of England,—though the claim of the nation, as I hold, is paramount to all,—it feels naturally indignant at seeing them, after being wrested from its own grasp, in the possession of a Church that endeavours to secure that possession by unmitigated hostility against the ancient faith and its professors. And another objection of the Romanists to the Church of England is, that in Ireland at least, where the Romanists have the majority, they are ruled over by the minority—they have to bow before a body and pay to a body that is incomparably smaller than their own, that has little or no hold upon the population, and that merely exists like a Roman garrison in a colony, arrogating the wealth and power of the land to itself, and having but little of common feeling or sympathy with the natives. And this, assuredly, is not a very unreasonable ground of objection, nor one to be treated disrespectfully. Of all sects—for it is but a sect, though it is the largest and oldest of all sects—there is none of which the professors claim more forbearance, more regard, than those who belong to the Roman-Catholic denomination. Of all existing Churches, theirs is the oldest—of all existing priesthoods, theirs is the one that can trace farthest back its lineage, and, with the greatest appearance of plausibility, set up the pretension of uninterrupted succession from the days of the apostles to the present time—of all who claim the sacrifice of reason to be offered on the altar of their faith, the Roman-Catholic authorities do so most plausibly, because they profess to have in return for it an infallible guidance, to which no other pretends in theory, though all others make the same pretension practically. The followers of this Church in our own country adhere with some sort of chivalry to the faith of their ancestors, in its season of debasement and suffering and persecution, as their

ancestors held by it in its time of power and of glory. We look upon their Church as the mighty, though mouldering, relic of a state of things long gone by, that belonged to the days of feudalism and of darkness, but which, even then, claimed its origin from a preceding period of knowledge and of brightness,—going back like the heroes, the warriors, or the philosophers of ancient Greece, who boasted a long line of illustrious progenitors, and ascribed their origin to their gods.

The next division which Mr. Gladstone makes of the enemies of the Church is embodied in "the professor of political economy, who considers this connection as a visionary theory only, and mischievously known by its tendency, when obtruded into practice, to interfere with what he deems the substantial interests of mankind." This is fairly stated: the political economist does make this objection to the union of Church and State—and the political economist has some reason for making it. He sees in Canada and others of our colonies immense tracts of land kept in an uncultivated condition—they are clerical preserves, which are to be made valuable by the exercise of diligence and of industry on the land around them; and then, without any care or pains, any outlay of capital or of labour, or any thing but the mere naked act of holding the title to them, they are to become valuable endowments for the Church; and he thinks, and properly thinks, that this is a serious obstruction to the progress of national wealth and of human interests. The political economist also sees that, in this country, tithe operates as a tax on the capital and industry of the cultivator, or as an enhancement of the price of the first necessary of life to the consumer—he perceives that it connects in sordid and worldly interest the great body of the clergy with those who establish and sustain the most infamous of all monopolies, that of the means of sustenance*—he beholds a large unproductive class existing in society, tending to increase the burdens of those who are industrious and productive; and in all this he sees interference with the machinery of government, of labour, of commerce, of all that belongs to that ability to surround man with the conveniences and enjoy-

* This was spoken before the repeal of the Corn Laws.

ments of life which is the preparatory step to his advancing towards intellectual enjoyment and spiritual existence. The objection of the political economist is not only a sound objection in itself, but it is also a Christian objection—it is in the very spirit of that religion which this connection of Church and State is said to be the means of upholding and disseminating in the world: for what do we find there, but that God created the earth for the children of men, that He gave man title and dominion over it, that He sent him forth to exercise that dominion by its cultivation, and by the free enjoyment, as the reward of his toil, of whatever it could produce; he finds there the theory of human right, the theory of human title to the productions of nature, which is totally at variance with that which is ever advanced in the world by the combination of two such bodies as Church and State. He finds there that the earth is the Lord's, and not the landlord's—that it is His, and the fulness thereof; and that those whom He has created of one blood to dwell on the face of the whole earth, according to their degree of personal exertion and social usefulness, have a right to share in its produce. He finds this Christian precept or law, that if a man will not work, neither ought he to eat; and he finds that nothing more tends to bring this principle into disrepute, nothing more tends to reverse it or to exclude it from society, than the system of Church and State—he finds there, in its own particular department, that the gospel which Christ gave to his apostles to preach was to be a free gospel; and he sees that priesthoods, clerical corporations, and the identification of Churches with States, ever tend to render it a monopoly.

He then goes on to speak of "the democrat, who naturally desires to strip government of all its highest duties, and leave to it the performance of no more than mechanical functions." Where has he studied the history of democracy, or how would he explain the philosophy of democracy, so as to ascribe to it such a tendency as that? For what is democracy, but the enjoyment of the powers of government by the entire community, or by those whom they delegate? and how can it be the "natural desire" of one who would do this, to diminish his own share of the supreme power—to confine within the narrowest limits, and reduce to the lowest sphere, that of which he claims to exercise a portion

himself, that which he is distinguished from other political theorists by declaring to be common property, and so far, to a certain extent, his own property? I cannot think it is "natural" he should desire his own degradation, nor that it is natural he should strive after that which would only be his own circumscription. As the States of America are generally referred to as democratical, it may be said that they circumscribe the powers of Congress; but if they do, it is that the powers may be exercised by the State governments—it is an arrangement by which the operations of society are localised, and by which local wants and desires have a better chance of being attended to; besides, even with this arrangement, they remit the highest powers, the highest questions, such as those of peace and war, and constitutional right, to be decided by Congress: they do the reverse of that which has been delineated as the natural tendency of democracy. So in the States of Switzerland: there the governments exercise more power rather than less, as compared with those which are differently constituted—they become more paternal, entering into whatever belongs to the condition of citizens. And, if we look back into antiquity, in what States of modern times is there any thing like the all-pervading direction that belonged to the democracies of Greece? The government took charge of every thing: amusement, art, religion,—all were the objects of its attention, towards all was the social combination directed, with every power that it possessed. It is, in fact, the principle of democracy to give government its highest attributes, and to remove it to the farthest distance from any thing like mere "mechanical functions." Whatever there may be of this description while democracy is in progress, it arises from a jealousy of other forms of government, which is sanctioned by experience—from a desire to restrict their interference, because that interference has been so often found hostile and pernicious: and this character of the season of conflict is one of the evils arising from that conflict, and gradually passes away as men have clearer views of what may be done by social union, and how largely it may multiply the means of individual enjoyment.

There is an omission in this list, which is rather remarkable. We have the infidel, the Romanist, the political

economist, and the democrat, but not the orthodox Dissenter; and yet the orthodox Dissenters are much more formidable than any of the bodies herein enumerated. In England they are more numerous, they are more united, they are more thoroughly organised for friendly or for hostile action, they are more active and determined, and their hostility is also more distinctly and openly avowed. Their sects are confederating, at this very time, to establish what they call universal religious equality—but what really does mean universal sectarian equality. They hold, too, the creeds of the Church, generally believing in them quite as well as, if not much better than, do the professed members of the Church itself. They do not object to the Church as a machinery for religious discipline; for they exercise, many of them, a much more stringent discipline in their own societies. Their objection to the Church is, that it is not sufficiently a religious body, that it does not answer the purposes which writers like Mr. Gladstone ascribe to it,—that it is secularised by the State, instead of christianising the State in its alliance. Now, if all these bodies have united, as he says they have,—if they all agree to consider the Church a great grievance and nuisance, requiring a thorough reformation,—does not that afford some sort of presumption that it does require a reformation, that there is a necessity for such a combination among parties so hostile? for who more opposed than the Romanist to the orthodox Dissenter, or than both to the unbeliever? The political economist and the democrat too are frequently at variance in their spheres, and may be deemed generally at variance conjointly with different religious bodies. And yet he says they have all united. There must have been a stringent motive for this, and great must be the grievance which makes parties, so different in their pursuits and general practices, to harmonise in the one circumstance of declaring that such union should be dissolved. It was the complaint of a celebrated author, that he had been attacked by different sets of writers, and on very different principles, and that they had urged very different objections to him and his works; but it was remarkable that none had dealt with him in the way of fair reasoning, but that they had all ridiculed him: and this mystery was, perhaps, partly solved by the suggestion of a friend, that it was owing to

there being something very ridiculous in him. And so, if the most opposite classes, if the most unlike theorists, agree in objecting to the alliance of Church and State, is it not the presumption that there is something objectionable in the union? The inclusion within the comprehensive grasp of the Church of men who are avowedly irreligious and immoral, is perhaps the leading objection of the orthodox Dissenters to the system. It is one which the writer does not seem exactly to know how to deal with. However, he admits the fact, and sets up for it some sort of excuse—even endeavours to find in it some presumption of utility and of Christian authority. I shall read two or three paragraphs on this topic, because they are interesting, as showing how a well-meaning man, with a bad cause, must occasionally flounder in his apology.

"The true interests of a Church," he says, "are best to be ascertained by considering its nature. It is an organised body, governed by the laws and ministers of Christ, having the charge of the Word, and the exclusive administration of the Sacraments, and dispensing both for the promotion of a spiritual life. Her end, then, is 'the greatest holiness of the greatest number;' her inanimate machinery has no capability of pleasure and pain, has no interests, in any intelligible sense. Her living members have all one and the same interest; the aggregate of that interest constitutes the interest of the Church; and it is the production, not of the greatest possible excitement connected with religion, nor of the greatest possible enjoyment connected with religion, nor of the greatest possible appearance of religion, nay, not even the greatest possible quantity of actual religion at any time and place; but the greatest possible permanent and substantial amount of religion within that sphere over which its means of operation extend. By religion, we would be understood to mean, conformity to the will of God.

"Now, we, who hold the principle of national establishment, believe that, although a higher average of active religious motive may be found in limited and sectarian bodies, yet this is simply because the establishment is set and appointed to embrace, along with her more spiritual and intelligent children in Christ, those who are too timid to make a religious profession;" that is, those who allow

themselves to be irreligious;—"those who hesitate between this world and the next;" that is, those who Christ expressly declared did not belong to him, and were not owned by him;—"those who give a limited and insufficient scope to the action of Christian principle;" that is, those who are Christian apparently in one portion of their conduct, and as clearly unchristian in another;—"those who attend Christian ordinances only in compliance with human opinion, or those who see nothing in Christianity but a system of outward forms, in an establishment nothing but a method of preserving social order and of repressing religious extravagance." That is, really, a very curious account of a religious body which the author deems so essential to the promotion of spiritual life. "And it may, doubtless, be said, that the very constitution of an establishment, as thus represented, indicates an unsound state of things;" rather so; "that the observance of Christian ordinances ought not to be exacted by the force of human opinion, but rendered by the spontaneous and joyful action of the heart; that these false and imperfect services of so many differing classes cannot be satisfactory to God;" he might have added, nor to man either;—"and unsound, indeed, is the condition of human society; but the question is, would it not be more unsound were the restraining influences of an establishment withdrawn? Certainly, her faithful members must be content to stand side by side with many who care little for religion; but the promises of Christ may secure them from the danger of contagion,"—scarcely the implied promise in the prayer, "lead us not into temptation,"—"and they may also acquire from their position a livelier remembrance of that lesson, that we may not say one to another, Stand by, for I am holier than thou. I say the promises of Christ; for the establishment does but fulfil his prophetic declarations,"—he does not refer, I apprehend, to the prophetic declaration, that "Every plant which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be hewn down and cast into the fire," although corrupt ecclesiastical bodies will, no doubt, in time become the fulfillers of that prophetic declaration;—"for the establishment does but fulfil his prophetic declarations, in not attempting any universal separation of the tares from the wheat, of the good fish from the bad; content with the laws of her

mixed condition upon earth, emulous of the example of her Lord, who ate with publicans and sinners; and generous as her heavenly Father, who sends rain and light upon the just and the unjust, rendering benefit, but not therefore receiving pollution." It would have been just as much to the purpose had the Church pleaded the example of Christ, in multiplying to the greatest extent the number of loaves and fishes, and distributing them to its followers.

The writer has clearly described a worldly system, and not a religious one—a machinery for the promotion of hypocrisy, and not for the generating and elevating of spirituality. He has blinked the fact, that outward worldliness and irreligion, thus incorporated with and passed under the name of religion, must secularise that into which they are introduced; and that very often indeed—exercising, as they do, the most extended influence in the patronage of the Church—they must give to its ministrations the character of a political or pecuniary contrivance—one of those very agencies against which pure religion, high intellect, and real Christianity maintain incessant warfare.

It is the evil of theories of this kind, theories of Churches and of States, patched up in order to support that which has grown so corrupt as to be in the most imperative need of reformation, that they mislead on other points, that they introduce false principles of government and of morals, that they promote a disregard for the rights and interests of humanity; and such is the case here: the writer will not allow the existence of any thing deserving to be called government where, in the ruling and legislative authority, there is diversity of religious opinion. He says:

"There may be a state of things—in the United States of America, perhaps in some British colonies, there does actually exist a state of things—in which religious communions are so equally divided, or so variously subdivided, that the government is itself similarly checkered in its religious complexion, and thus internally incapacitated by disunion from acting in matters of religion; or, again, there may be a State in which the members of the government may be of one faith or persuasion, the mass of the subjects of another, and hence there may be an external incapacity to act in matters of religion. We do not here trace out all the consequences, but it has been shown that

this involves dereliction of the functions and responsibilities of government; and it is enough, therefore, for the present, to have marked each of these combinations of circumstances as *a social defect and calamity.*"

Now, whether it be "a defect and calamity," or perfection and good, it is the state of things in this country, and there is such dereliction—there is, no farther off than Ireland, this disagreement between the great mass of the population and the ruling power—there is in our own land such diversity of opinion on theological subjects, that it is impossible to form a legislature which shall be in complete theological harmony. We are in the condition which, he says, incapacitates the government from interfering in matters of religion; and therefore the whole of his argument is conclusive that the government of such a country as this ought not to act in matters of religion.

Sad it is, that religion—religion, too, sincerely believed by individual minds—should have led so often into so many contrarieties. The widest, the most contrasted evils, have been thus generated. Thus has been produced the self-punishing devotee, lacerating his body for the supposed good of his soul, and inflicting upon himself, with his own hands, the severest torments—thus has been produced the bigot, who punishes others, and not himself, who has pleaded with dungeons and racks, who has sent men to the stake for the good of their souls, with little scruple as to the means by which he established the iron sway of his creed over the consciences of others—thus have been formed the most presuming pharisees, men who would say, "Stand by, I am holier than thou," not to the erring and the vile, such as the author has described, but to the best and the wisest of their fellow-creatures—and thus have also been formed the most abject and superstitious, who would cringe in the dust before the feet of their priests, or before unconscious images of wood and stone, and whose souls, when they ventured to pray to the God of all, addressed him as a tyrant who was to be propitiated by the servility of their adulations, who was to be disarmed by the abjectness of their deprecations—thus have been formed those who would, in the excess of their fanaticism, break the common bonds of social life, and who in past times have plunged daggers into the hearts of wise and generous rulers—and thus have

also been formed those who would bend the lowest before despotism, become its servile ministers and tools, and lend themselves to the work of fettering the bodies, or, if possible, the minds, of their fellow-creatures.

Religion, in its genuine essence, in its simplicity and in its purity—religion, as it grows upon the human mind—exercises an influence the reverse of all this on the development of intellect and of all our various faculties; it makes man neither persecuting nor servile—it incites him to punish neither others nor himself—it elevates him not by pride in forms, nor does it debase him in the consciousness of depravity—it neither leads him to the violating of social order by fanatical attempts at the destruction of those who exercise authority, nor does it lead him to submit to that which invades the rights and privileges of mankind, and the assertion of which rights and privileges is their best and dearest interest; but it sends him through the course of his earthly life, a man amongst men, living as their brother; and then it leads him down to his grave trustingly, in faith and hope, as the rational child of God.

THE PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION.

No. I.

January 20th, 1839.

All the world is agreed that there is a great deal of religion in the world; and all the world disagrees as to where that religion is to be found, in what it consists, and how it is manifested.

Ask the Hindoo what religion is, and he points triumphantly to the ceremonies of his grand festivals, shows you the car of Juggernaut, moving on with trains of dancing priestesses, and accompanied by the shouting of huge multitudes, as it rolls over the bodies of those who prove their aspirations and their title to the crown of martyrdom by throwing themselves beneath its crushing wheels; and there he sees the world's promised religion, and that religion's triumphs.

"The idolater! the base idolater!" exclaims the Mahometan; "what is Juggernaut in the world? Great is Allah, and Mahomet is his prophet:" and for his view of religion he points to the empire of the faithful, to the sway of the descendants of the Prophet, to their tributary kingdoms and nations, and to all the triumphs over infidelity gained by their good swords and the courage inspired by the promise of their leader.

"False Prophet!" cries the Catholic; "not there is religion. It is delusion, accursed delusion." He, for religion, bids you look to the throne of the successors of St. Peter, to gaze on their stately temples, to hear the chanting of mass, or from their public and splendid ceremonials to turn to a power yet greater over the human mind, that of the confessional, where the heart is laid bare before the priest, every secret offence is made known, and

the whole moral being humbled at the footstool of the hierarchy.

"Antichrist, the harlot that sitteth on the seven hills, the beast of the Apocalypse," says the Protestant; and then comes his claim for the best-constituted Church in the world, with its Homilies, its Litany, and its Prayer-Book, "worthy of the apostolic ages," and its creeds, dictated by a hardly inferior kind of inspiration. Those who protest against his Protestantism, point to their crowded chapels, and to the hundreds of thousands, or millions, who are so devoted to the word of God as to hear three sermons every Sabbath, besides attending one or two prayer-meetings on the same day, and others through the week,—thus manifesting the vitality and power of that religion which is alone acceptable to God and profitable for man unto salvation. While the Calvinist counts his multitudes, the professed rationalist, or the Unitarian, reckons up his six or eight who, in the last twelve months, have been brought to the denial of the doctrine of original sin, and so forth; and in this he sees the first-fruits of the harvest, the promise of that day when the Lord shall be one, and his name one, in all the nations of the earth. Thus, all classes agree that there is religion in the world—much of it, too—and progressive religion, which is to go forth conquering and to conquer; but with views so diversified, so incompatible, that their evidence, taken in one way, seems to prove the world full of religion, and, in another, that there is no religion at all.

What, then, is religion, and how are we to extricate ourselves from the seeming difficulty involved in this multiplicity and incompatibility of statement? How can we arrive at its reality, how analyse its qualities, how detect its essence? There are two modes in which such a subject may be pursued, analogous to those which would be adopted in any other philosophical inquiry. We may take it analytically or synthetically. We may take the undisputed exhibitions, if such are to be found, of the qualities by which religion is characterised, or we may endeavour to arrive at an idea of religion, and from thence to deduce its phenomena.

Now, individuals may be selected from the pages of history and biography whom all classes and diversities of belief admit to have been religious beings. Who are they, and how were

they distinguished? I suppose there is no name in regard to which a more general assent would obtain than that of Fénélon, the virtuous and devout bishop of Cambray, and the author of *Telemachus*. Who recognises not his character as sincerely and intensely religious? The Catholic venerates his memory as that of a saint, though he may never have been formally canonised. The orthodox Protestant finds in his writings the best, the purest, the highest expression of his own feelings. Heretics join in the recognition; and perhaps one of the most just estimates of his character and works, and certainly one of the highest eulogies on his memory, was that which proceeded from the pen of Dr. Channing, the American Unitarian. Here, then, we have, indisputably, a religious man; and what is it that goes to this general impression? Not the doctrines he held, for these doctrines are objected to by a very large proportion of those who venerate the piety of his character. He was even a heretic to his own Church. Besides being a Roman Catholic, and a Roman-Catholic prelate,—and therefore personally and practically informed of the peculiarities of that Church, and so far infected with what other classes conceive to be its errors,—he was a rebel even to the authority he acknowledged—he was rebuked for his aberrations from his own faith, and pronounced to be tainted with the mysticism of the Quietists. Nor is it for the form of worship which he rendered, or for his assiduity and punctiliousness in all observances that his Church requires, and which may be called the mechanism of its religion. Whether he excelled in or disregarded these is scarcely known, as a matter of fact, to many of those who hold his memory in such regard. But it is on account of the tone that pervades his writings,—it is on account of the grasp, the loving grasp, which his mind seems to have of all things created, and of Him the great Creator. We find this, not merely in his religious meditations, but in his celebrated romance, his *Telemachus;* where he shows us the aspirations of his mind to realise an ideal of morality —to embody virtue in such characteristics, intellectual and moral, as might associate it with the princely state, and make it not only the means of individual excellence and happiness to the monarch, but the source of blessedness to the governed millions. These are the characteristics pervading

his writings, which give us the impression of a mind in which the moral feelings were so expanded and exalted, that it was large enough to enfold all existence in its embrace—which rose in its religion above the peculiarities of time and sect and Church, and, looking abroad on the world with the eyes of affection, considered all existence as allied to it by fraternal ties, and beheld in all the working of almighty Love. This, I believe, is the reason why all, whatever their different opinions, or the particular character of their dogmas, unhesitatingly regard Fénélon as a religious man.

Perhaps Sir Isaac Newton is, in our own country, the man whose position is most nearly the same. He has always been regarded as eminently a religious man. The heretic claims him as fraternising in his own religion, even in its peculiarities. The Church of England claims him as one of its members, and always adduces his name with pride, as in itself an argument by which scepticism or unbelief is to be silenced and put to shame. His character and his philosophical views have been made the basis of a series of discourses by the most celebrated of Presbyterian divines in our day, of course implying and expressing the highest estimate of his personal religion. Now, of Newton, as of Fénélon, we ask, what is it that makes his religion generally admitted? It is not that he wrote two treatises upon an interpolated text—not that he attempted to expound the prophecies of Daniel and the revelation of St. John—not that he occasionally partook of the sacrament according to the forms of the Church of his country—not on account of any distinct and formal recognition of any peculiar mode of religion in his writings,—these things have been combined in many men who yet have established no religious character thereby; but it is entirely the effect upon his mind of his philosophical speculations and discoveries, so evident in the spirit that pervades his works. His studies were studies that tended to generate religion. He saw, and he made obvious to others, the principles of law, of order, of harmony, of the unity and beneficent tendency, that pervade universal being. The very nature of his discoveries tended to the extension and the exaltation of man's notion of creation and of the Creator's plan. A scene of grandeur opened upon him,

like that which is described in the book of Genesis as the work of creation, when out of chaos arose order—when "God said, Let there be light, and there was light"—and when, in harmonious array, one form of being and of life after another developed itself, until at last man was created, to be, by reason, the ruler of the whole. And it is from the working of these ideas into a feeling, from the profound reverence, and the practical recognition of order and of unity—that Newton has commanded general assent to the sincerity of his religion, and to its rational and elevated character. We have in him, then, a similar principle to that which was observed in Fénélon, however different in its manifestations.

If we turn from modern times, and from Christians real or nominal, to go back to some name in antiquity which has commanded any thing like a similar generality of admission, and take the philosopher Plato—Plato, so often called the "divine"—what in his works produced the impression on Pagan and on Christian, on Jew and on Gentile, which, through a long succession of ages, and over a wide diversity of countries, has still borne the same appearance, and still implied the same recognition and veneration for excellence? It was the ideality of his philosophy—it was his rising from particular forms to the largest and most elevated conceptions—it was from speculations on the Deity which were not mere speculations, but of which it might be said that they partook of the character of the discourses of Christ, and that in their words there was spirit and life. It was because he identified these views with the well-being of humanity—because he had bright and glorious visions of the progress of society—because he delineated in his imaginary Republic principles and grounds of action and arrangement which were for ages to be regarded only as dreams, but were at length to show a power to make their way into the regions of reality; that is to say, it was from a largeness of apprehension—it was from a grasp of soul, it was from aspirations of the loftiest kind, and tenets also of the most diffusive nature—that he left on all the impression of a religious philosopher, of one whose philosophy was worthy to retain that name, even amid the light and blaze of truth that in after days might irradiate much of the beauty

which in his time was covered by the profoundest darkness.

If we look to the biography of Christ himself, the allowed and venerated pattern of religion to all who bear his name, what is it in the evangelical records that produces this impression? We do not find in Christ much that his followers are apt to represent as the essentials of religion. We do not find punctiliousness in the forms of public worship—we find no rigid and unimpeachable sabbatarianism, but a conduct which continually drew upon him reproaches and charges as a breaker of the Sabbath and a violator of the law of Moses. We do not find him preaching doctrines that since have arrogated the name of orthodoxy: little that is doctrinal is to be found in his discourses. But we do find a devotedness to truth. For this cause was he born and came into the world, that he might bear witness to the truth; and that witness he did bear unswervingly. We find in him constant reference to the will, the pervading will, that works through creation, realising its own benignant purposes; and therefore he could look upon the ever-shining and moving stars of heaven, and say, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." While, in relation to humanity, his object ever was to realise his own good Samaritan, to throw down the barriers of nation and of party, to teach men to love each other as brethren without distinction, and to confirm that fraternal bond by their conception of God's paternity.

We have, then, in all these cases, similar grounds for the assent that has been enforced from so many different classes of persons. They cannot find their own doctrines—they are unable to produce evidence of conformity with their own external modes and expressions of faith and worship—they are totally at a loss for any indication of much which is held up as most important to votaries of their own sect and party—and yet they are all compelled to acknowledge that here was religion.

What, then, is religion?—what, but that aspiration, that glowing faith of love to God and man, that identification with all conscious existence, which, in these instances, was found to be most common and characteristic? The etymology of a word, although by no means a sure general guide to the best exposition of the term, yet, in many

instances, renders important aid towards a distinct conception, and perhaps may do so in the present instance. What is religion? If we take the etymology of the word, it is a binding together, or rather a rebinding, implying original unity, subsequent separation, and a new combination effected by an interposing power. And thus were all things one originally, either in internal nature, or in the ideas of the divine mind. Thus was there absolute unity, which, in the divine action, emanated forth into its thousand diversified forms of material and of mental existence; and as consciousness rises to the perception of that process—as it traces all the infinite varieties that exist back to their single source—as it feels their present relations, as it anticipates their ultimately being bound together again in that divine unity—in that degree is there religion working itself out in thought, in feeling, in action, in resistance, in struggle, in triumph, in hope, and in all those diversified moral phenomena which command our veneration, and which we would embody in our own spirits.

Perhaps it would be difficult to develop this idea of religion more appropriately than in the words of one of the most philosophical of our poets, who, indeed, in this did little more than, as has been recently said of him, "breathe the soul of Plato into British verse." Akenside, in the second and revised edition of his *Pleasures of the Imagination*, which is seldom quoted, as it certainly wants much of the poetical fire and beauty of his youthful composition, but which has in some cases—and this is one—the advantage in the greatness and propriety of philosophical truth, thus describes what I have been endeavouring to state:

> "From heaven descends
> The flame of genius to the chosen breast,
> And beauty with poetic wonder joined,
> And inspiration. Ere the rising sun
> Shone o'er the deep, or mid the vault of night
> The moon her silver lamp suspended; ere
> The vales with springs were watered, or with groves
> Of oak or pine the ancient hills were crowned;
> Then the great Spirit, whom his works adore,
> Within his own deep essence viewed the forms—
> The forms eternal—of created things:
> The radiant sun; the moon's nocturnal lamp;
> The mountains and the streams; the ample stores
> Of earth, of heaven, of nature. From the first,

On that full scene his love divine he fixed,
His admiration : till, in time complete,
What he admired and loved, his vital power
Unfolded into being. Hence the breath
Of life informing each organic frame ;
Hence the green earth, and wild-resounding waves ;
Hence light and shade alternate ; warmth and cold ;
And bright autumnal skies, and vernal showers,
And all the fair variety of things."

In this operation we see the divine idea emanating into material existence, with all its diversities. He goes on to trace it in the varieties of mental existence :

" But not alike to every mortal eye
Is this great scene unveiled. For, while the claims
Of social life to different labours urge
The active powers of man, with wisest care
Hath nature on the multitude of minds
Impressed a various bias ; and to each
Decreed its province in the common toil.
To some she taught the fabric of the sphere—
The changeful moon, the circuit of the stars,
The golden zones of heaven. To some she gave
To search the story of eternal thought—
Of space and time—of fate's unbroken chain,
And will's quick movement. Others by the hand
She led o'er vales and mountains, to explore
What healing virtue dwells in every vein
Of herbs or trees. But some to nobler hopes
Were destined : some within a finer mould
She wrought, and tempered with a purer flame.
To these the Sire Omnipotent unfolds,
In fuller aspects, and with fairer lights,
This picture of the world. Through every part
They trace the lofty sketches of his hand :
In earth, or air, the meadow's flowery store,
The moon's mild radiance, or the virgin's mien
Dressed in attractive smiles, they see portrayed
(As far as mortal eyes the portrait scan)
Those lineaments of beauty which delight
The Mind supreme. They also feel their force,
Enamoured; they partake th' eternal joy."

If such be the just view of religion, it emanates from the unity of the Creator's works—it flows back towards him, the author of all, containing in himself all the qualities by which his works can be distinguished in their highest, in their infinite excellence. It is the principle which reunites all that has flowed in divided courses, bringing it again

into the fulness of our conception of God, of pious feeling towards him, of good will towards his creatures. It is through this absorption of self in the great whole that our faculties arrive at their highest degree of individual development. Now, if such be a correct view of religion,—a restoration not from such a fall as that described by theologians, with all its technicalities and all its incongruities, but a restoration of universal being to the spiritual oneness of its origin in the divine mind,—then have we a test by which the various pretensions to religion may be tried—by which we may see at once whether they possess or do not possess its true spirit. For if such be the true character of religion, what can we find of it in the gloomy, distorted views of nature and of man which are sometimes incorporated with theology—in which this goodly scene of things appears a howling wilderness, and the entire creation under God's wrath and curse—in which man's spirit wanders from Dan to Beersheba, or to the remotest parts of the world, and finds that all is barrenness—in which there is no sympathy with the exclamation of the Psalmist, who, looking up to the heavens, the work of God's fingers, the moon and the stars which he had ordained, exclaimed, "What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him? For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour"? There is no sympathy in such a view of nature with the declaration in the Mosaic writings, that when God had finished his work of creation, he said that all was good, and crowned it with his benediction. In depreciation of the works of God, and of the goodly mansion in which he has placed his rational creatures, though it be but the house of their education for a more exalted condition, we see a principle of disjunction rather than of unity; and we cannot recognise that as true religion which separates God from nature.

Nor can we allow that to be religion which alienates man from a heartfelt oneness with the world around him—which discourages the beautiful works of art or the profound discoveries of science—which is very apprehensive lest discovery should lead to notions (true as they must be, if founded on real discovery) that are incompatible with the petty dogmas of its own theological creed—which tends

to introduce jarring and disunity into the feelings with which we contemplate the world—and which would shut man up from the face of nature to worship as in a cloister, secluded from all that can call forth his sensations of the good and the beautiful, and elevate his feelings towards their great author.

That is not genuine religion which tends to separation between man and man. Nor can the character be allowed to systems that isolate human feeling—that, by resting salvation on faith, assume infallibility in some, and fatal error in others—that elevate certain individuals with the spiritual pride which says, "Stand by, I am holier than thou"—that draw a broad line of demarcation here between brethren whom God has made of one blood, and announce a yet more formidable line of separation hereafter—that distribute and classify the world, and represent one portion as the object of divine care, the other portion as the object of a divine curse. These have not the unity that characterises religion; they separate between man and man.

Nor can the name of religion be conceded to systems that furnish gloomy and appalling theories of the divine attributes—that surround God with the terrors of vindictive justice, make him unapproachable unless propitiated by the outpouring of blood—ascribe to his laws a character almost of ferocity, such as human legislation in any civilised region would disclaim—and, while in this world they interpose a thick cloud before his throne, which prayer cannot pierce, show us the long perspective of a hell hereafter, where souls may be for ever banished from his presence, and interminable ages only find them at the commencement of their agonies. There is nothing here of the unity of spirit that is essential to religion: for it separates, eternally separates, between God and man.

THE PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION.

No. II.

January 27th, 1839.

Religion is that which unites the finite spirit to other finite spirits, and all with the Infinite Spirit within which we live. From this definition many consequences follow. One is, that there can be no discrepancy, no disunity, between religion and science. In fact, the sciences are all part and parcel of religion—they are all emanations from Him from whom flows all good and all existence. And this view of the oneness of religion and of science is confirmed alike, whether we glance at the subject historically, or endeavour to contemplate it abstractedly.

Historically, religion was the first, the oldest of the sciences. The most ancient books of a country are generally its religious books. The writings of Moses and the book of Job are probably the oldest writings in the world; and if we look from the scriptures to what is called profane literature, the earliest production, in all probability, that we possess is that in which old Hesiod sang how, "eldest of beings, Chaos first arose," and thence traces a long array of deities through all their various gradations, and in the different spheres of their influence.

The governments of antiquity were governments founded on religion. The first of lawgivers in each state was usually the author of a religion, which gave its sanction to the power by which he restrained the wilder tendencies of humanity, and laid the foundation of enduring temples of civilisation and of social order. Nay, take the very savage as he wanders in wild regions, and, though he be no chemist or mechanician, ask him whence comes the thunder or the harvest; and he will tell you they are from God. Every

where we find the notion of religion presiding over the conceptions of science; and every step gained in the discovery of science is, in fact, the solution of a problem in theology —it is an answer to the question of how God does this or that; and all the advantage of the philosopher over the savage is in this, that he traces two or three of the intermediate steps, being compelled logically to rest at last in the same final result.

If we look at the tendencies of science, they all in turn, as they emanated from, advance towards a reunion with religion. Accordingly, in the best conception of a National Church, in that most able and philosophical work in which the late Mr. Coleridge has endeavoured to trace the essential character of such an institution, we find him representing the function of providing for the civilisation of a country as belonging not only to theologians, but, in common with them, to men of science and of literature—to the artist and to the poet as well as to the priest.

If such be the genuine idea of a national clergy or clerisy, the notion of a religion alike comprehensive is involved therein; we at once get rid of the discrepancies imagined by theologians, and aggravated for the purposes of priest-craft. When, even in modern times, apprehensions are felt for religion on account of the progress of science—when the Deity is represented as warring with the sciences, somewhat like Jupiter defending his supremacy against the Titans—when astronomy is to be overthrown with one thunderbolt of the divine vengeance for describing the plurality of worlds, and geology with another for construing the antique characters that mark a duration of the earth different from that of the Mosaic theory,—we behold different portions of religion set at war one against the other —wild disorder and confusion introduced where all is real harmony.

Every scientific truth is a theological truth. It is another item of information conveyed to our minds of the mode in which the Deity works, and often—incidentally and dimly, it may be—of the ends which the Deity purposes. They all belong to that view of religion in which we recognise it as the bond between man and man—as the bond between finite spirits and the Universal Spirit.

What makes the Bible so eminently a religious book,

but its constantly keeping in view this oneness between man and God,—its bringing it home to our perceptions,—and, whatever degree of historical credence may belong to the narrative, representing in its spirit the ceaseless contact of Creative Power with created being—subsisting, indeed, in it, but also continually appearing in external contact with it? This is the spirit especially of the Old Testament. We always find intermediate steps and operations disregarded, and the Deity placed, as it were, in immediate conjunction with his creatures—the great agent of all transactions. Do we go back to the golden or paradisiacal age, when only the first parents of humanity were in being,—their sole work to keep in order the garden which the Lord had planted, and their sole danger the temptation to partake of the forbidden fruit in the midst?—we read then of the "voice of the Lord walking in the garden in the cool of the day." Or do we look to the period when tribes had grown up into nations—when Israel was groaning for emancipation from Egyptian slavery?—then we find that the Lord of Hosts was the leader of their bands—that he marshalled their armies—that he led them forth by a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night, and at length whelmed the hosts of their oppressors beneath the waters of the returning tide—that he afterwards gave them in the wilderness their laws and the sacred bread, and drove before them the Canaanites with their gigantic champions, having walled cities whose towers reached to heaven? With so little preparation is the Deity introduced, and in a manner so destitute of those intimations and circumstances which, in works written under other influences, are always put forth to guide the mind to the anticipated advent, that the voice of God often resounds upon our ears with a startling abruptness as we study the pages of the Old Testament. There is something of this in the call of Abraham. It is like a sudden voice heard in the stillness and dead of the night. The Lord said to Abraham, "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, into a land that I will show thee." A similar effect is produced by the lyric prophet, when—anticipating the return of the Jews from Babylon—he, like the sudden sound of the pealing of trumpets on the ears of one who believes himself wandering alone in an interminable wil-

derness, gives this description: "The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God." This mode of introducing the Deity directly, suddenly, abruptly, into all human concerns, extends throughout the whole of the Old-Testament history; something of it we find even in the New-Testament record, when, as Christ stands by the waters of Jordan, a voice, like the low muttering of thunder, declares to the assembled spectators, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him."

The New Testament takes up the other portion, the other view, but the brighter view of religion, and makes more prominent the striving after the oneness of humanity —the aspirations of created beings to be in harmony with each other as well as with the Power in which they all subsist. Accordingly, we find the doctrine of man's brotherhood taught by Christ from the first, and taught in every varied form which could commend it to the understanding and to the heart. We find his apostles exulting in the uniting and identifying power of his name, raising their loudest song of thanksgiving that Greek and Jew, barbarian and Scythian, bond and free, all were to be one in Christ; and in the power of this principle the narrative and argument of the New Testament holds on, until it closes with the sublime vision of the Apocalypse, when every creature in heaven, or on the earth, or under the earth, or in the sea, yea, all that in them are, unite in the ascription of salvation to God and the Lamb. The impression of the whole book of the Bible, of the Old and New Testaments combined, is that of an earnest and imaginative realisation of the essential unity of all things that exist—of man with man, and of men with God.

Other religions, mythologies, and superstitions bear also marks of this aspiration, although striving for its accomplishment in a more imperfect manner. What but this was the spirit of the old Egyptian religion, of that mythology in which the divine attributes were personified and represented under the figures of different animals, until their Pantheon seemed a great illustration of the natural history of their country,—made to typify divine attributes and influences, and to portray the external powers of physical nature which contribute to the happiness or the misery,

the perpetuation or the destruction, of human existence? In the more graceful mythology of Greece—giving to every stream its tutelary spirit—peopling the woods and the waves with their nymphs—assigning to every country its guardian deity—realising, for example, in Minerva, the representative of Athenian wisdom and the protectress of Athenian freedom—beholding deities in all directions, in the kingdoms of earth and of ocean, of heaven and of hell, —we still behold an effort in the natural to combine with the supernatural, in the visible to combine with the invisible, in the transitory to combine with the enduring—all in this, as in other systems, being blended together by the delineation of a Father of gods and of men, sovereign over the whole, and giving to them that oneness after which the mind ever seeks in the exhibition of religion.

The tutelary saints and angels of the Roman-Catholic system were generally formed by the same principle. They were emanations from a desire in man to raise himself in identification with universal being. We find the same principle in the severest Protestant forms that religion has assumed,—denying the traditions of ages, the cherished reveries of nations, and fighting its own way with no weapon but its supposed literal interpretation of Scripture. In the hardest dogmas of the Calvinist, and in the wildest experiences of the Methodist, we trace the same aspiration after oneness. What is the doctrine of original sin, with all its horrors, but a testimony to the fact that man's spirit cannot submit to the idea of isolation—that, in whatever presents itself to his senses as indicative of the divine alienation from man, or the wandering of man from God, he would trace the cause, and assign it to guilt and total depravity rather than not account for it at all? And, in the influences of the Spirit which he believes to descend upon him in the supernatural change which he calls his conversion, what is there but another modification of the constant endeavour to be one with God and one with his creation?

Nor is it merely when man is directly and consciously meditating on religion, that he shows this tendency, or perhaps that he best exemplifies religion. In every exalted and excited state of mind—when heroism puts forth its daring exertions to save the lives of fellow-creatures from impending destruction—when the philanthropist sets forth

on his circumnavigation of the world for the deliverance of the prisoner or of the oppressed—when even military courage perils life for the sake of a country's glory or defence—when the student spends days and nights in the solitude of his study, endeavouring, by the sacrifice of health and of fortune, to realise some truth, not merely on account of the glory which may cling around his own name, but for the sake of the good which it may pour forth as a swelling tide of blessing among his fellows of mankind—in all these we find something far beyond the definition which Paley gives of virtue, "obedience to the will of God for the sake of everlasting happiness." Persons who are elevated by such excitements as these are not thinking of obedience—they are not thinking of law—they are not thinking of recompense; they are striving after good, that good which they would realise in others as well as in themselves, and which they realise in themselves by realising it in others; and in these high and holy aspirations is that undefiled religion which, in the definition of the apostle, was "To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep ourselves unspotted from the world."

If such be the genuine definition of true religion—such its manifestation—teaching us the feeling, not merely of charity, but of justice and of appreciation, towards those who hold it in the wildest or most superstitious forms, or towards those who deny it with the fiercest antagonism, and who are often in that very antagonism championing the rights of individual minds, and manifesting some portion of the essential spirit of religion,—if such, I say, be its best definition, what vain talk, what childish babble, is that which we often hear about a religious education, and about the necessity of introducing religion into any plan of national education! Religion is not any thing that can be catechised or lectured into a child. It is a growth, not a graft. It is something which is to result from the entire system of youthful training, something which is to be its pervading spirit, and not a set of facts to be impressed on the child's memory in the course of one afternoon in each week, or by any such mechanical arrangement. If children are to be made religious, and I think they ought to be,—if religion should be connected with education, and it should pervade it and be its great result,—why, then, to make

children religious is to teach them to love whatever is lovely, to admire whatever is grand, to feel whatever is beautiful—it is to teach them to appreciate the self-correcting mind of Alfred, in his adversity getting rid of the errors that had defaced him in his previous days of prosperity, and preparing to make his name illustrious in his country's annals—it is to teach them to weep tears of admiration at the fall of Hampden, of Russell, and of Sydney—it is to make them rejoice in the devotedness and the exalted attributes which mark the characters of such women as Lady Jane Grey, Lady Russell, or Mrs. Hutchinson—it is to let them see plan and order in the events of history, and in the growth of social arrangements, like the development of a plant which they may mark in the fields when spring time is coming on, and watch from day to day, and from week to week—it is to make them familiar with what has been produced by the greatest minds of our nation, and to enable them to enjoy the fanciful allusions of Spenser, the sublimity of Milton, the universality of Shakespeare—it is to show them nature and art as well as books, to lead them through every region that can stimulate the mind, or render the imagination that source of blessedness and of power which it was destined to be in the arrangement of the human faculties—it is to make them look abroad on the lofty mountain, the wide-stretched plain, and the flowing river, and see symbols of spiritual truth in all physical order, harmony, and loveliness; and it is by the lofty state of feeling thus produced, and by the character thus formed—character fit to go forth and redeem society from monstrous ignorance and oppression, character fit to aid in carrying on the work of man's advancement, and the completion of the plan of God—it is thus that education is sanctified—it is thus that education is made "religious"—it is thus that there is not merely a teaching of dogma, but a generation of the very spirit of religion, realising all its noblest products, and thus uniting man with man, and men with God.

And this indicates the mode in which the individual best cultivates religion. Religion is not a science which you can learn like geometry; it is not an art which you can practise as you would a handicraft occupation; nor is it a sect among whose votaries you may be enrolled, as you may be made the member of a club or society. It is that which

results from the entire state of the feelings—it is man in his noblest condition—it is man nearest to his Maker, and yet most at one with his fellow-creatures. By reflection,—giving up the mind to the influences of nature, and to the noblest powers of the intellect, as exhibited in the works that are laid before us for our study; by endeavours so to place ourselves that the best influences, the most pure, noble, and elevating, shall have their full action upon us, and that those which are low and base and sordid, however potent or popular, may be grappled with, and shorn of their worst power of mischief,—these are the modes in which the individual best cultivates religion in himself. It is thus that he grows up into the spirit of God, into that spirit which broods over creation as in the first moment of its existence, when the everlasting and unbounded blessing was pronounced thereon—a blessing which man inherits in thus learning to regard his fellows and his Maker—a blessing which sheds sunshine on his path here, and opens to him the brightest and most enduring prospects beyond the grave.

THE PROVINCE OF REASON IN RELIGION.

February 3d, 1839.

There has always been a good deal of discussion amongst religious people about the use of reason in matters of religion. It has been found very hard to define the provinces of faith and of reason—to say where the influence of the one should cease, and that of the other begin; and in what particular mode, or at what particular point, the one should be corrected and restrained by the other. Those who have pleaded for a distinct division of the provinces of these two principles, have drawn their boundary-line at very different degrees. Some have maintained that reason must examine by external evidence the books of the holy scriptures, and that when it has done its duty in ascertaining these—or rather when it has done its duty, according to their construction of the matter, by ascertaining and allowing the authority of such as are generally admitted—its functions are to cease, and all the rest is to be implicit belief in whatever is found in these books. Others have extended the province of reason farther than this: they have allowed it to investigate the canonical authority of the different books that are generally received, to dispute or deny the claims of some of them, or even to advance further into the task of interpretation,—but still limiting it by demanding the implicit reception of whatever is to be found there, when once the right interpretation of a passage has been ascertained. Others have allowed a degree or two beyond this; but still in all these discussions there has been this constant source of confusion and of mistake—that it has been supposed that faith and reason could not coexist—that when the operation of faith commenced, reason was put in abeyance. I believe the true solution of the difficulty to be—and I can see no

means whatever of avoiding the conclusion—that faith and reason are coextensive—that the province of reason in matters of faith is just the same as the province of reason in matters of science—that the difference is not in the faculty to be exercised, but merely in the objects upon which it is exercised—that science may be called a revelation to man through his reason, as the facts of nature and the great laws of nature are brought before him, and he finds the evidence of their nature and of their reality. And so, in what is called revealed religion, we have facts of an extraordinary description submitted to individual intelligence, in order that from them it may derive whatever religious knowledge they are capable of imparting to it, and which, of course, must be measured by the degree of intelligence thus brought into action. And while there has been this confusion about the agency of faith in matters of religion, there has not been less confusion—though, perhaps, it may not have been so prominent—about the province of imagination in matters of religion. Some parties are particularly apt to upbraid others with giving loose to imagination in religion; and, in turn, they themselves are upbraided with having a cold, material, and lifeless system. Most people seem to agree that there should be some imagination exercised or stimulated in connection with religion; but they are equally at a loss to define the boundaries of that province as they have usually shown themselves to define the province of reason. They regard the imagination, under certain circumstances, as a very good and beautiful thing—they admit it has place in religion—that it is to be limited in its sphere and regulated in its exercise; though, when we come to inquire how it is to be limited, and on what principle it is to be regulated, all the information one commonly gets is this, that it is to be so limited and regulated as to give life and power to their dogmatical opinions—that it is to be so limited and regulated as not to allow the feelings to become interested in any other system of faith, worship, or practice besides their own. I suspect the solution of this question to be precisely the same as that of the former question about the province of faith. It does not seem to me that the imagination is a faculty to be limited in its exercise, any more than reason; but that it is to run through the whole of religion, if it be admitted there

at all—and admitted it must be, in religion, as in any thing else that concerns humanity; because, being one of the constituent principles of our mental and our moral nature, it must have its appropriate agency in whatever belongs to humanity.

But to throw any light on such a topic as this, I must proceed in reference to the subject that has occupied the last two lectures—we must bear in mind what the religion is with which the human imagination has to do, and endeavour to avoid the confusion that has existed on this part of the subject as well as on the other. The last two lectures on the Philosophy of Religion have tended towards such principles or propositions as these—that if we take merely the opinion of different classes of religionists, we shall be perplexed by contradictory assertions, made with equal vehemence,—that the world abounds in religion, and that the religion with which it is said to abound is mere idolatry and superstition. We find all sects, all religionists, accusing others and excusing themselves—or rather advancing their own creeds, and making those creeds inconsistent with the creeds of any other religionists; and it was found in the investigation of this subject, that individuals may be selected —names that have floated down the stream of time—which few or none have hesitated to acknowledge as denoting men of religious character, and that of the most exalted order. Several of these individuals were passed rapidly in review before us, and the endeavour was made to ascertain what, in reality, it was in them that enforced the general recognition of their being religious; and it was found to be in the largeness of their views and the corresponding fervency of their spirits—in their regard to the universality of that Spirit which formed the world, and which lives, and breathes, and shines, and glows in all the varieties of material, of mental, and of moral being; we found it was in this truth to their human feelings—in their idealising humanity and goodness, as they had idealised the Deity in a loftier manner than was evinced in the conceptions of others by whom they were surrounded. We found this elevation and expansion of feeling the great characteristic of Christ—and, therefore, of the religion, the Christianity, which he taught—however different it may be from that which has been inculcated by many of his followers. Regarding the matter from another point of view

—looking not only to the persons in whom religion was exemplified, but to the word itself in its etymology—we found religion to consist in the perception by the individual spirit of the bond which links itself to the Infinite Spirit and to its finite fellow-beings—we saw in the word the course of restoration to that identity which existed in the divine mind while creation was yet the thought of God, and not the actual and external exercise of his power. We thus were enabled to trace and test the systems which by their gloom separate God from nature, or man from nature, or man from man, or man from God. We tried by it also the too common separation of religion and of science, which are only portions of the same principle—we tried by it those endeavours to isolate a priestly class—we saw that it tends to unite all men on the same common ground in the presence of their God and of one another. And hence we inferred that religion was not any thing to be catechised into and matured by arbitrary precepts to the mind of man, but something that must grow up from the cultivation of the faculties, and which is, in truth, the finest development of his being, whether considered in itself or in its relation to the Creator or his creatures.

Now, this is the religion in which we are to ascertain what is the province of imagination—of imagination, that faculty in us which gives reality and life—which operates in the mental constitution as the nerves do in physical being—being the link between mere thought and emotion, affection and action—by which we endow abstractions with vitality—by which we present in a living and moving form that which would else be cold and repulsive, and could exercise no force over the inward current of our thoughts, or over our external conduct. And if we bear in mind this description of religion and of imagination, I think we must at once perceive that much that has been ascribed to excess of imagination is in truth owing to its deficiency—that in many of what have been deemed the most glorious instances of the imagination run wild, taking its own way in spite of all reason, and going to all the unreasonable extremes it could reach, there has been only an imperfect exercise of that power, a little more of which would have corrected the mistake, and realised the good at which the individual aimed.

Now, take a few instances of this. And, first, the voluntary martyr of Christian antiquity: he has been specified as one whose imagination hurried him beyond the bounds of religious truth and reason. The voluntary martyr is a common character in antiquity. There were many of the early Christians who diligently sought for martyrdom. They imagined so vividly the celestial crown of glory, that they were impatient until they could feel it around their own brows—they endeavoured to provoke persecution; they were so eager to be with Christ in heaven, that they thought they were too long upon the earth, and they stimulated persecution to pronounce their mittimus. This was ascribed to their exuberant imagination of the glories of heaven. But suppose their imagination had realised them a little further?—they would then have analysed the jewels that constituted the brightness of which they were so desirous, and they would have seen that among them were love and mercy, kindness and endurance and forbearance —they would have realised heaven yet more distinctly; they would have seen that heaven is not only beyond the grave, but on this side of the grave—that the kingdom of God cometh within us, and not with observation of the conspicuous sacrifice that they were so desirous of offering in their own persons; they would have felt that they could walk with God, and be with Christ, in this world as well as in the world to come; that it was in their own minds—it was in the state of their own souls, and in their aspiring condition, and in the gladness that will arise from their loftier and more enlarged views—that that heaven existed towards which their attention was so incessantly directed: and thus, by the further cultivation of their imagination on religious matters, they would have achieved the good they sought without stimulating others into the guilt of persecution.

The hermits of Christian antiquity have also been regarded as men who were led astray by an over-strong imagination. But here I take the solution of the case to be the same. They retired from the world that they might be more with God—they did not wish their communion with God to be interrupted by the collision of human actions—they did not wish their meditations to have flitting across them the scenes and transactions of human and social life—

they were purifying their own souls, and they did not wish to be tainted by the temptations that might assail them in the concerns of life; and so they fled to the desert: as if God were not as much in the cultivated field, in its richness and its beauty, as in the sandy desert or in the cave of the rock—as if God were not as much in the collisions of society, in the development of man, his noblest creature, and in the interests, the thoughts, the feelings, the passions, the exertions of man, as in the wide waste where there are only the lower manifestations of his wisdom and of his power; as if the soul could not only escape taint, but make its advances in excellence—adorn itself with more and more sincerity and truth and active beneficence—where these qualities have their sphere of operation for those who enjoy the most or suffer the most, rather than where only one individual is exercising the rational consciousness of being, and only sees around him the unthinking, unreasoning forms of material existence. They had only to realise more vividly the presence of God—they had only to see, by the exercise of their imaginations more distinctly, how he is in all things, and all things are in him—and they might have found in society a far better sphere for communion with him, for knowing their own souls, and for realising the growth of those souls in goodness, than all the deserts of the world could ever furnish.

The missionary has been adduced as an instance of enthusiasm—of imagination in religion rushing beyond its appointed boundaries. He leaves friends, home, native land, crosses the widest oceans, seeks the most barbarous countries, gives all his time, endures countless sufferings, in order to rescue the heathen from the perishing to which he thinks they are doomed—his imagination realises the pervading depravity of their hearts—he sees the thunderbolt of heaven suspended over their heads, and would avert its falling upon them—he realises the groans and anguish of eternal torments—no, he does *not* realise them; for let his imagination but step forward in this path—let it but realise them in all their horror—and he will cease to believe the doctrine, and retire disgusted from the profession of its faith, or from any exertions to convert the heathen that depended on its application to their circumstances. It is only because "depravity" and "eternity" and "torment" pass over

his lips like mere words, or only because they are coldly enshrined in his thoughts as dogmas, that he connects with them each exertion and sacrifice that he makes. Let him understand the meaning of the words—let him realise fully not only the imperfect view of humanity by which he is influenced, but what the human heart is, the common human heart, even in those who are deemed the vilest—let him realise what eternity means in connection with intolerable torment,—and his enthusiasm is cooled—the fanatic subsides into a reasonable person—he learns to love his brethren of heathen religions as well as Christian—and, as the idea of God purifies itself by this process of the imagination, he kneels no longer before a merciless tyrant, but before a paternal Deity.

And that which holds true in these theological instances, of the continued exercise of the imagination curing the excess which had arisen from its imperfect exercise, also applies to cases of moral and social duty. What has been wrongly called sensibility, but which may be called sentimentality, has been erroneously taken for an excess of imagination operating on the nervous system. I allude to the feeling which is so alive as to slight things, but which seems generally at the same time callous to matters of more importance—to those who would weep for the trodden insect—who would relieve, perhaps, at any hazard to themselves, the passing beggar—but who leave unregarded matters which affect the well-being of humanity, laws which rob industry of its rightful reward; they continually repeat that—

> "the poor beetle that we tread upon,
> In corporal sufferance feels a pang as great
> As when a giant dies;"

and so they feel as much for the beetle—for the trampled beetle—as they would for the mangled and dying giant: and this would be all very right, if the "corporal sufferance" were the sting of death. But, surely, the imagination that can realise corporal suffering should realise also that mental anxiety and suffering which gives death all its horrors, and by which alone it can be constituted the king of terrors. So, when Goldsmith makes his hermit say—

> "No flocks that range the valley free,
> To slaughter I condemn;
> Taught by that Power that pities me,
> I learn to pity them,"

and so on, he is only giving a very twaddling repetition of sentiment which belongs to the narrow imagination rather than to its true and expansive exercise: because, had all the world been touched with this species of tender feeling towards the inferior animals, it would not only have limited the enjoyments of mankind, but it would have precluded the very being of those that have been brought into existence only that they might become the food of the human race; while that race itself would have been limited, would have been enfeebled and corrupted, by such humanity; and push it to its farthest extent, and it would be one of the greatest cruelties, instead of one of the tenderest sensibilities, that has ever existed.

It is difficult to understand how any natural faculty can ever be in excess. We may be told that people have more imagination than reason, or more reason than imagination; but, on investigation, this will generally turn out to be not excess. Sometimes there may be a deficiency of judgment as compared with imagination, or a deficiency of imagination as compared with judgment; but then it is the weaker faculty that requires developing. Cultivate whatever is deficient; but let it not be imagined that the qualities with which the Creator has endowed our being were not meant, each and all, to be carried towards the highest degree of which they are capable.

Reason and imagination are mutually productive. Instead of restricting one another, they generate one another. An infinite imagination, conceiving all things of heaven and of earth, of time and of eternity, would be an infinite reason; and so an infinite reason, realising these things, would gain the plastic power that is assigned to the other quality, and become an infinite imagination. Hence the greatest works of imagination,—such as, to take the grandest in our own language, the characters of Shakespeare, so true to the inmost workings of our spiritual being, so varied according to the idiosyncrasies of every different individual that is brought forward, bearing such a stamp of reality, that even when they relate to beings beyond the sphere of observation, to beings called from the invisible world, we still acknowledge them as realities; and so abounding with truth, that the statesman quotes them in his political discussions, and the philosopher cites them

in his lectures, as if they were the narrative of external facts. Those grandest productions of the creative imagination can only be panegyrised in terms which show them to be the grandest productions of reason—in terms which show how much truth, in some way or other, has been ascertained—how much has been done for exemplifying the extensive agency, the lofty exertions, of the reasoning powers. And it is curious that the writer who, next to Shakespeare, has most deeply given this stamp of reality to the productions of fiction, was a man of a very different character—of what would generally be termed an unimaginative one—Defoe; who, not only in his *Robinson Crusoe,* but his other works, his fictitious *History of the Plague in London,* and his *Memoirs of a Cavalier,* has compelled the world to recognise historical and biographical verity. Here we have a similar point arrived at from very opposite sources. We have an illustration that, instead of imagination and reason being opposed and corrective, the higher exertions of the one have ever their affinity to the higher exertions of the other, and converge towards complete identity; and hence all the greatest names in literature, ancient or modern, are names which immediately suggest to us both the reasoning and imaginative faculties. Instead of the excess of the one overcoming the other, the more they exceeded their fellow-creatures in the one, the more they exceeded them in the other also. The imagination has even anticipated, in innumerable instances, the progress of logical and mechanical discovery in the physical sciences. The imagination of Copernicus delineated the solar system long before it was demonstrated by the propositions of Sir Isaac Newton; and Bacon had noted, in his work, the travelling of light, generations before its speed was measured and calculated. Treatises have been written to show us that the ancients were acquainted with all the sciences and arts which flourish in modern times, that they were lost during the dark ages, and are now only revived. The evidence, which is built upon various expressions of the theorising philosophers of ancient times, certainly does not bear out such a position. But, though they do not show it, there is something they do prove; and that is, that imaginative philosophy anticipates, by many and many an age, the plodding work which analysis is able to accomplish when the time arrives.

The confusion that prevails on this subject from not discriminating what is and what is not the exercise of imagination, leads into countless absurdities. How continually one hears, blended together under the very same phraseology in common parlance, productions the most dissimilar and contrasted! One writer piles together a monstrous mass of fictions—he violates the natural order of events—he violates the natural coherence of character—he intermingles things that were never conjoined in the world, and separates those which are always found united, and pursues his course through a mere continuation of unmeaning falsehoods; and they call this a work of imagination. While another penetrates into the workings of the human mind, as unfolded by the usual course of events; he delineates this to the life, as in the novels of Sir Walter Scott: or he places humanity in extraordinary circumstances, surrounds it with preternatural incidents, and in these makes man act with a truthfulness that all must recognise, as in the *Ancient Mariner* of Coleridge: or he goes beyond the visible world, endowing spirits with such appropriateness of speech and action, that the truthfulness of the picture is recognised, as in the creations of Shakespeare;—and yet to these, so immeasurably above what I have described, people give the same term, call them works of imagination, and class them together as belonging to the same catalogue.

So in religion. One man tells you what passed in the councils of the persons of the triune Deity: he can state the mode in which the great bargain of redemption was arranged, and what each person undertook for the satisfaction of the others; he has read, and can expound, the decrees of election and reprobation; he knows the workings of the Spirit; he hears voices, and has supernatural warnings; he struggles with the devil, and holds with him daily and nightly contention; he can tell you the latitude and longitude of hell, and knows the bearings of all the streets in the New Jerusalem;—and this is called imagination running wild in religion. While another looks to the starry heavens, and marks there orbs not subject to our seasonal vicissitudes, or those of day and night, and infers that they are the fitting abodes of immortality; he gazes about him in nature, and he sees nature full of energy—all

nature dies and lives again; he penetrates into the heart of man, he marks the progressive principles of his mind, blessing the infinity of his passions—that even the feeblest of them are enabled, when thoroughly roused, to shake this our mortal tenement—and beholds in all this the promises of a state of existence that is yet to be;—and he is called one who lets his imagination loose in religion. One speculator constructs, with cloud-like materials, a new moral world; he disregards what have been the principles of human action at all times and under all circumstances; he speculates upon man's becoming a different being from what he is and has been, and talks of arranging circumstances so as to mould character at will; he talks of these in all their infinities, stretching back as they do with reference to the obscurest individual through all the long ages of the past, including as they do ten thousand influences imperceptible to us, but which may be brought to bear so as to stultify all his calculations; and when disappointments succeed to disappointments through the day, still, as the setting sun beams a transitory brightness upon the clouds of evening, he looks up to these, though they are but the "baseless fabric of a vision," and sees in them the forms of the future communities that he has anticipated. This we call imagination, and then apply the same term to such spirits as those of Sir Thomas More and Plato, when, in their Utopia and imaginary Republic, they disregard the local and temporary, but ever keep in view the essential and permanent; so constructing their systems of society that, though thousands of years may pass by before they are realised, they yet exhibit that towards which human society is tending, its progress towards which is marked by essential improvements in political or social life. Such works are the anticipated history—anticipated, but authentic—of man's future destiny on the earth.

Now, while these are all blended together, what but confusion can result? In one we only hear the warbling of the rude pipe to which the satyrs gambolled, and in the other the music of that heavenly lyre to which the muses listened—in the one we see only an earth-born form of earth, and earthy, in the other we have a condensation of celestial light, the glory of heaven, upon an earth life-giving and joy-creating; and to confound principles like these, under a

common term, is merely to disable ourselves from any proper use in such matters of the reasoning faculties. Mere falsehood has no more to do with imagination than Belial has with Christ. Were the matter rightly considered, it would exercise, I think, an important influence on education,—it would especially lead to what is so much wanted in this country,—it would lead to infusing into the minds of the young, as soon as they are capable of receiving it, the spirit of our great writers—those men so grandly distinguished by a large development both of the imaginative and logical faculties—who are themselves a demonstration, not only of their compatibility, but of their essential alliance—and in whose works we may learn how to understand human nature, how to understand religion, which is an appeal to human nature in its own being and conviction. We may learn from such teachings that reason should never be stopped by faith, and told it must not investigate this or that, as reason should be the inlet by which faith comes into the mind. Neither should imagination be stopped: its empire is coextensive with that of reason. Their union has been always exemplified. The poets of Greece were philosophers, their works the storehouse of wisdom for statesmen through all coming ages; and the philosophers of Greece were poets too, and in their language we find the most lovely gems of the purest eloquence and poetry ever poured forth. In old Judæa, the bards were prophets, and the prophets were bards. Throughout the books which embody the Jewish and Christian religions, there is a continuous exercise both of the reasoning and of the imaginative faculties. It is this which has ever given them their hold upon human nature, and made them so subservient to its improvement. In the language of the Greeks, a poet meant a creator; and what is creation but the visible and external manifestation of the poetry of the Divine mind?

CHANNING'S "SELF-CULTURE."

February 17th, 1839.

I HAVE in my hand the last publication of Dr. Channing, recently imported from America, and reprinted in this country, on *Self-Culture;* and this publication reminds me of having myself lectured on the same subject, under the title of "Self-Education," about eighteen months ago. That was done at the express desire of some of the congregation who felt strongly interested—as it is most likely a considerable number of those who attend here may now be interested—in such a subject; relying as they must do to a large extent on their own exertions for the formation of their mental and moral characters, and for the exercise of their faculties in those different ways which conduce to enjoyment and to utility. I accordingly refer to such memoranda as were made of the course which I took in these lectures, for the purpose of bringing before you any such matters, whether of correction, of comparison and contrast, or of additional suggestions, as may result from observing what has been advanced by this eminent writer: and, looking back into what I endeavoured then to bring under your notice, the course which I shall take is,—first, briefly to remind you of the substance of those discourses, and then to refer to some passages in this publication on *Self-Culture*.

It was observed on that occasion, that all the great benefactors of the world, mental, social, religious, have been self-instructed. Not only were they the authors of original works in literature, or of great combinations in society, but they were the authors of them without previous directions or principles for their guidance. They struck out their own course—they took, as has been said of Howard, an unfrequented path to fame—or, we may rather say,

they made a new path, of which the human mind might avail itself in all succeeding ages. Who instructed Homer in the art of poetry, when he began that immortal work which has served as the model, as the store-house, from which the critics of later times draw their rules and principles of criticism?—a work yet unrivalled amongst the compositions of genius in later times, which sprang into the world entire and perfect, in all that grandeur and variety which has since commanded admiration. He had no previous epic poems on which to form his model; his instruction was in the power of his own genius, and in the action and reaction of that genius upon the phenomena of the external world and the materials of traditionary story. Who was the instructor of Socrates in philosophy, when he brought it down from the cloudy speculations of the Sophists, to tabernacle amongst men, to regulate the concerns of daily life,—when he brought it home to men's bosoms and to men's business, and made it their daily guidance?

Who was the instructor of Numa in legislation? or, whoever he—or they—may have been, who were the authors of the institutions and laws which have been ascribed to a person of the name of Numa, though historical criticism may have thrown doubts on his personality, on his very existence? Whoever was the author of institutions that bound together the powers of the Roman Republic, he trod a grand but previously unexplored path, created a new power in the world, gave form, and being, and energy, and permanence to that which, anterior to him, had no existence. And so amongst the religious reformers of a comparatively recent date. Who was Luther's teacher in the rights of individual conscience, in the power of self-interpretation, in so much of the spirit of true religion as he discovered and extracted from the corruptions of the Romish Church, and asserted with all the power of his strong and fearless mind? These men were all characterised by the same quality of originality,—they all were their own masters, and became, as it were, their own disciples, before they were the masters of others, and made others their disciples. And not only so; but large classes of men who have left enduring memorials of themselves on the face of the earth have generally risen in the same way. There may have been different gradations of talent or of genius amongst them—some may have been,

comparatively, leaders in the course they took, and others but followers: but as classes they were self-taught; they sprang up in the world, which had no perception of the work they were about to achieve, and they have left memorials of themselves which have not been surpassed or rivalled by the accumulated knowledge of later times. Who were the instructors of the Grecian sculptors? who taught them not to follow the course which had been previously pursued, not to hew out those rough and rude and misshapen forms which were all that Egypt or India knew? who taught them not only to portray in marble the human form in its most exquisite symmetry and beauty, and grandeur, but to idealise that, and to produce statues that seem worthy to be the corporeal representations of gods, and which command the homage of the world? Not less original than they were the painters of Italy in the middle ages. They were equally destitute of previous masters and teachers; they were equally compelled to rely on their own resources; they fully felt the stimulus of genius excited by favourable circumstances; and hence they produced their creations, which even yet charm the world and defy competition. The builders of the cathedral structures of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries were a similar race of men. It is even now a matter of discussion among antiquaries, who and what they were. Unity of style, similarity of plan, like diversity, and like skill and combination, are to be found in those magnificent buildings which they erected in this country or elsewhere, rivalling the works of nature more than any others of man's creation. They are believed to have been a band of skilful men who travelled over Europe, leaving memorials of their progress in every region which they visited: with the aristocracy and the Church, as patrons, furnishing them with funds,—with the multitudes in each country following their directions,—but themselves the authors of a system of architecture which stands alone, and which, by its richness and its beauty, by its general effect and by its simple principles, amply repays the student for the time and care and thought which he expends upon its marvellous exhibition. These were all self-taught men; and almost every thing which is eminently valuable in the world is self-taught. It must be made the individual's own, before it is to him truth or power; it must become incorporated, as it were,

with his intellectual and moral being, before it is living truth—a vital spirit, and not a dead letter. Where there are the amplest means of instruction,—where man is surrounded with teachers, and books, and every implement of experiment,—it is only as his own mind, for itself and by itself, realises that which it can lay hold of in the external world, and makes it a portion of his own being, that he becomes really instructed, that he possesses any thing which is really worth the name of education.

In the lectures which were delivered on the occasion to which I have referred, I endeavoured to trace the course of instruction which an uneducated student might pursue, —leading him from the science of strict form and number up to the mixed sciences, in which the results of those universal principles derived from geometry are applied, in combination with the varying properties and phenomena of matter—thus opening before him the whole world of real existence, with the previous preparation of universal and essential truth;—from that, advancing to the construction of his own corporeal frame, and the knowledge of the faculties of his mind, which is among the most important objects of science,—and from that, to the narrations of history, the visions of the noblest poetry, and to moral science, into which all ultimately resolves itself—the greatest of sciences, the science of man, on which is founded the art of happiness. And it was inculcated in these lectures, that the mere accumulation of fact, the possession of knowledge, the observation of that which is, whether in the material or in the moral world—that these are not the sole and ultimate object of pursuit; that there is in all a higher individual purpose, which may not be kept in view at every stage of the process, but which should be the original aim of the process, and its animating spirit. Man himself is nobler than all that can be the object of human knowledge; he is that for which the world around him exists; for the phenomena on which our faculties are exercised have their best and highest results in the formation of those faculties, and in their training by exercise to maturity. Here, then, is the ultimate result. Man's imagination should be vivid in its power—man's feelings should be strong in their exercise, in their sympathies, in their outpourings; his memory should be richly and amply stored, and his judg-

ment should sit as the administrator of God's law upon its own throne,—having its faculties well exercised to discern good and evil, and to distinguish between the one and the other. The training and building up of human character is the object of our existence,—it is the worthy object of the study of oneself or of others,—it is that to which the whole of our operations should have a tendency, as the great result in which they are to be consummated.

In indicating the different modes of operation and action which should be adopted for this end, I endeavoured to impress on the minds, especially of youthful students, that they should shun familiarity with mediocrity—that they should cultivate an intimacy with the greatest and best minds, as they are preserved to us in their works—that they should each have some favourite hand-book, rarely indeed laid aside, the object of daily or nightly contemplation—that such works as the *Essays* of Bacon, the writings of Milton, the *Christian Morals* of Sir Thomas Browne, some of the sermons of Jeremy Taylor, Locke's *Conduct of the Understanding*,—that some of these works should be their companions. This frequent companionship with great minds induces a similar spirit in the student, and trains those who would discharge their duty to their country and to themselves to follow in a like course, to be animated by their inspiration, and to realise in their own characters some of the greatness of those who have shed so much lustre upon the name of our country. And our investigation was connected with an inquiry into the principles of moral training, into the various notions that have been adopted as the basis of moral theories, and into an enlightened and exalted system of utility—a utility which includes mental as well as material good, and relates to individual excellence, and to the gratification which necessarily flows from it, as well as to the mere accumulation of outward wealth—and in the pursuit of which we find man tending towards his ultimate and best condition.

Imperfect and merely suggestive as many of these views may have been, I trust they in some measure answered the purpose for which they were then brought forward; and that I am now addressing many who have been duly and deeply impressed with the importance of self-education or self-culture, two phrases which mean precisely the same thing, ex-

cept as the former may glance towards the material of education from without, and as the other may advert towards the object of it in the creation of character within. And those who are interested in the subject under either of these names, and in all its diversity of forms, may not only peruse Dr. Channing's work with advantage to themselves, but may, as I have done, derive from it a stimulus and useful suggestions.

The first passage that I shall quote to you from Dr. Channing, occurs in the introductory matter of his lecture, and is a general view of the worth and grandeur of human nature—of human nature, not as we view it in its highest development, not as it strikes us with admiration, either from being surrounded by whatever is impressive in the human condition, or in developing what is most grand in the human mind, character, or genius—but the worth and grandeur of human nature as it exists where only its elemental principles seem to be possessed, and where the person is altogether devoid of these distinguishing peculiarities.

"Every man, in every condition," he says, "is great: it is only our own diseased sight which makes him little. A man is great as a man, be he where or what he may. The grandeur of his nature turns to insignificance all outward distinctions. His powers of intellect, of conscience, of love, of knowing God, of perceiving the beautiful, of acting on his own mind, on outward nature, and on his fellow-creatures,—these are glorious prerogatives. Through the vulgar error of undervaluing what is common, we are apt indeed to pass these by as little worth. But as in the outward creation, so in the soul, the common is the most precious. Science and art may invent splendid modes of illuminating the apartments of the opulent; but these are all poor and worthless, compared with the common light which the sun sends into all our windows, which he pours freely, impartially over hill and valley, which kindles daily the eastern and western sky; and so the common lights of reason and conscience and love are of more worth and dignity than the rare endowments which give celebrity to a few. Let us not disparage that nature which is common to all men; for no thought can measure its grandeur. It is the image of God, the image even of his infinity; for no

limits can be set to its unfolding. He who possesses the divine powers of the soul is a great being, be his place what it may. You may clothe him in rags, may immerse him in a dungeon, may chain him to slavish tasks; but he is still great. You may shut him out of your houses; but God opens to him heavenly mansions. He makes no show, indeed, in the streets of a splendid city; but a clear thought, a pure affection, a resolute act of a virtuous man, will have a dignity of quite another kind, and far higher than accumulations of brick and granite, and plaster and stucco, however cunningly put together, or though stretching far beyond our sight."

In this description of the grandeur of humanity, there is something, I must confess, which rather reminds one of the many descriptions of the grandeur of America. It is the grandeur of capabilities—of capabilities latent, not obvious—of an existence not yet realised, although the germ may be discernible. It is as when we read the description of what that country is destined to be—of vast cities extending the powers and blessings of civilisation over the wide waste of the interminable forest—of a population altogether free, having no distinction of colour dooming one portion of it to inevitable degradation—of institutions which generate the higher species of mind by their influences, as well as an ordinary run of respectability of talent and of character, and that produce poets and philosophers to lead mankind onwards—and of freedom of thought, opinion, and expression, in some measure correspondent with the freedom of public conduct which the democracy may guarantee. We turn from this panegyrical description of the States across the Atlantic, and behold the wilderness yet holding its broad dominion—we behold a literature which, to a large extent, is only a pilfered or borrowed one from other countries—we see thousands, millions, of human beings passing through life in all the suffering and degradation of slavery—and we find a tyranny exercised over the freedom and excursiveness of individual opinion, compared with which political despotism seems to lose its worst horrors. And yet we reverence the States in which these evils exist, the forms of government and society which they have instituted, because we see in them the capabilities of becoming that of which the enthusiast dreams—we see in them room for the operation of that

progressive power which will finally conduct society towards all that has hitherto been branded and scorned under the name of Utopia. And so it is in contemplating humanity. We see that, notwithstanding this grandeur of human nature, the poor endure a degree of toil that rises with the rising sun, and sets not with the setting sun,—that dooms them to use the various faculties of their corporeal frame only for that which one would think might as well be done by wood, and stone, and brass, and iron,—which, like a mere mill or engine, with ceaseless motion, endowed with an unhappy consciousness, moves on, grinding throughout the day its pittance of food for the scanty meal at night. We see man, finding no relief from this in a dark and cheerless, a noisy and dirty house, perhaps striving for refuge by resorting to scenes of cheap profligacy and dissipation,—losing the best qualities of the mind and heart by intercourse with those who are yet more depraved than himself,—and thus fulfilling the melancholy round of his being, until premature disease brings on premature dissolution, and thus he returns to the dust, seeming to have done little more than so much unconscious clay might have been kneaded and moulded and hardened to realise for the taskmaster.

What is there in this of human dignity? Why, there is the capability of better things—there are the elements of thought and feeling in all this degradation—there is the power to observe and to know, to live and to advance—there are the germs of all that makes our nature the noblest amongst the works of the Creator; and for capability we reverence nature even in the wretchedest individual: and for what else do we reverence it in the noblest?

When the mind rises seemingly at the instant fully satisfied with some of the greatest works of the greatest minds—when we feel enriched even by the faint echoes of the music of their souls which come to us, and see the world more real for the shadow of their speculations that have passed before us on the page—when our admiration and our veneration for them are at their very highest—what is it but this, that what from one point of view seemed the very perfection, almost the deification, of humanity, from another point of view appears only suggestive, merely a collection of germs? It is thus the capabilities of the most dignified

beings that the world presents become infinitely more dignified, shadowing forth something stretching away beyond all that they were and achieved into the regions of infinity and eternity. It is capability that makes the grandeur of human nature, whether in its meanest or in its loftiest specimen; and it is this principle implanted by Providence in our natures which forms the stimulus to self-culture and self-education—it is this which at once gives us the power and gives us the encouragement—it points out the end, and it suggests the motives and the means—it is this attribute of man which is our pledge of the progress of society, which we see working its way in the ages that are gone, and raising man from the condition of savage life to all the blessings and glories of civilisation, and from which we anticipate a like progress, and advance of a similar comparative height, in the ages that are to come—it is this which even suggests to our minds and recommends to our faith the stupendous notion of individual immortality,—of a being begun here, but which, in its capabilities and in the conduct of Providence in relation to them, is a promise, a promise written on the heart, that, after the change of death, man shall yet live, shall live for ever, in an eternity of improvement and of progressive development.

The next extract which I shall read from Dr. Channing relates to self-culture as an intellectual work. He recommends earnestly the love of truth, and its pursuit—disinterestedness, which is the very soul of virtue; and he accompanies this with some remarks which I cannot exactly view as partaking of the excellence of the admonition to which they are appended.

"Without this fairness of mind," he says, "which is only another phrase for disinterested love of truth, great native powers of understanding are perverted and led astray; genius runs wild; 'the light within us becomes darkness.' The subtlest reasoners, for want of this, cheat themselves, as well as others, and become entangled in the web of their own sophistry. It is a fact, well known in the history of science and philosophy, that men, gifted by nature with singular intelligence, have broached the grossest errors, and even sought to undermine the grand primitive truths on which human virtue, dignity, and hope depend. And, on the other hand, I have known instances of men of

naturally moderate powers of mind who, by a disinterested love of truth and their fellow-creatures, have gradually risen to no small force and enlargement of thought. Some of the most useful teachers in the pulpit and in schools have owed their power of enlightening others, not so much to any natural superiority, as to the simplicity, impartiality, and disinterestedness of their minds, to their readiness to live and die for the truth. A man who rises above himself looks from an eminence on nature and Providence, on society and life. Thought expands, as by a natural elasticity, when the pressure of selfishness is removed. The moral and religious principles of the soul, generously cultivated, fertilise the intellect. Duty, faithfully performed, opens the mind to truth: both being of one family, alike immutable, universal, and everlasting."

Now, here the gifted author seems to me to have fallen into what I may almost call the common cant about genius, and to have lost a portion of that reverence for humanity in its most lustrous development which he had previously expressed for humanity in its most undeveloped and shrivelled condition. For what is genius—what are the susceptibility and power of genius—but a pledge of truth? Genius is truth—the truth of humanity, the truth of a highly gifted nature brought into collision with the world without, and enveloping that truth in its own glowing atmosphere. We, no doubt, may find in the works of men of genius that which we may deem error; but we have reason to suspect ourselves in this matter, if we do not find that where truth stops, genius stops also—that the one is the soul and spirit, the heart's blood, of the other; and that where minds deserving of this appellation have drawn upon them such censures as are here delivered,—when they have been accused by all the world of running wild,—the lapse of time, and that at no very remote period, has shown it was the rest of the world that was running wild, and that they were only anticipating the truths of futurity. The censures that are here directed at the human mind, in that mode of it which we call genius, might with equal propriety be directed against the other powers of the mind; for every faculty is liable to the same abuses. Yet we seldom or never hear of a man's memory running wild, and storing his mind with mere trifles and nonsense, in default of some directing and

restraining power, such as is here represented as necessary to genius. We do not hear of his judgment running wild or stopping short, in terms of censure such as are levelled at genius. All the faculties have the relation of duty to one another; and it probably can never happen that any faculty needs repression, though others may require stimulus. The two examples that will occur to most minds in connection with censures of this sort, and to which I advert because their works render them most apt for illustration, are those of Rousseau and Lord Byron. Rousseau is supposed to have been in this predicament when he advocated a state of nature in contrast with one of civilisation; and yet, what was the condition of Rousseau's mind in that hour? I see in it only the strong and vivid impression of a truth,—a great and momentous and needful truth to the world,—so strong in him, that it burst forth like a volcano, with a similar glow, with a similar power, and eventually with some of the beneficial results which are occasioned by the overflowing of volcanoes. He was disgusted with the world's conventionalism, with the conventionalism in all its departments—the conventionalisms that are found in literature, that are found in society, that are found in politics—and he expressed, in appropriately strong language, the scorn which he felt for this conventionalism, its utter worthlessness; he heaped upon it the upbraiding which it deserved, and in process of time he did much towards abridging its empire in the world. It was in consequence of this running wild of genius that the mothers of Europe were taught to do the duty of mothers in nursing their children; it was in consequence of this running wild of genius that the schools were shorn of their pedantry, and the knowledge of things substituted, to some extent at least, for the knowledge of words, and thus education took a higher and bolder scope; it was in consequence of this running wild of genius that humanity rose in the assertion of its rights,—and though at first it may have been ill able to define what those rights were, and may have been ignorant of the best mode of securing them, yet the flame was then enkindled which can never be extinguished till whole piles of the worthless things of institutions and society are thrown thereon, and the world, recurring to the elementary principles of human nature, and combining them in ways

best adapted to the highest stages of real civilisation, shall bless the fact that once upon a time, though to the world's derision, genius did in Rousseau run wild. And so in Byron: what is that which makes so many turn away with horror from some of his pages, and discern in them nothing but an insane warfare of a human mind against Providence and against God? They say, Here is genius running wild indeed, rushing impetuously on Jehovah's buckler, waging warfare and rebellion against the Divine government of the world. But let us look a little closer at this. There are, it is true, in his works, expressions of this description, and a pervading spirit in conformity with those expressions. He did think the world a glorious blunder when he assumed the person of Lucifer or of Cain; he did give vent to those expressions—at least, I imagine so—to thoughts and feelings of his own inconsistent with what is regarded as the order of things: they were a species of rebellion against that which had been called Providence by his fellow-creatures. But, then, how stands the fact? Why, that divines, in their low-mindedness and ignorance, and yet in their presumption, have described Providence in a way that cannot reconcile it to the clear thought and free spirit of man; they have depicted God as a tyrant, and they worship him as an implacable tyrant—they tell us that he will ever require rigid satisfaction, blood for blood—that his nature knows not pardon—that an infinite substitute must be found, on whom to wreak out his infinite wrath, in order to open the way for such a being to bestow any grace upon those who, being imperfect and surrounded with temptation, had failed to realise all the requirements of a law which demanded infinite perfection. And in all this they do describe the tyranny which Byron hated—they do depict a cruel and remorseless government, against which his soul rose in rebellion—they show that, as to what they teach the world, and what they had taught him, such a government was only to be regarded with aversion, such a power was only to be denounced as tyranny. Is it for them to call out against genius running wild, when genius was arriving at truths which they, with all their subtlety and learning, had exhibited in a form so preposterous? I grant that this is not ultimate truth—it is only negative and antagonistic; and Byron's genius was not of the highest order—it was a genius that could rise

thus far to antagonism, but could not ascend beyond it—it was not the universal sympathy that could feel in all and with all, and that could realise the tendencies of all with that complacency which we may presume is felt by the beneficent Creator of them all. This would have been a yet higher and nobler development; and, from this elevation, the mind might have looked with calmness on that which called forth its antagonism—it might have regarded as evanescent error that with which it endeavoured to struggle as with an eternal tyranny—it might have seen that through all this murkiness there was really a light to be perceived, that there was an elevation from which the whole would be seen to move in celestial harmony: for the fact is, there are stages in the ascent of the mount of truth in which murkiness is to be felt, and where oppressive mists encompass those who endeavour to ascend; there are regions of doubt and of darkness; but above all there is brightness, as in the well-known simile of the poet:

> "Though round its base the rolling clouds are spread,
> Eternal sunshine settles on its head."

This lecture on self-culture, I may as well remind you here, was addressed to a society of artisans, called the Franklin Society, which holds regular meetings, like our Mutual Instruction Societies, for the purpose of self-improvement; and the next extract relates to the means which are commonly diffused of exciting perceptions of beauty and enjoyment, which might thus be rendered the common property of human beings.

"In looking at our nature, we discover, among its admirable endowments, the sense or perception of beauty. We see the germ of this in every human being; and there is no power which admits greater cultivation: and why should it not be cherished in all? It deserves remark, that the provision for this principle is infinite in the universe. There is but a very minute portion of the creation which we can turn into food and clothes, or gratification for the body; but the whole creation may be used to minister to the sense of beauty. Beauty is an all-pervading presence: it unfolds in the numberless flowers of the spring; it waves in the branches of the trees and the green blades of grass; it haunts the depths of the earth and sea, and gleams out

in the hues of the shell and the precious stone; and not only these minute objects, but the ocean, the mountains, the clouds, the heavens, the stars, the rising and setting sun, all overflow with beauty. The universe is its temple; and those men who are alive to it cannot lift their eyes without feeling themselves encompassed with it on every side. Now, this beauty is so precious, the enjoyments it gives are so refined and pure, so congenial with our tenderest and most noble feelings, and so akin to worship, that it is painful to think of the multitude of men as living in the midst of it, and living almost as blind to it as if, instead of this fair earth and glorious sky, they were tenants of a dungeon. An infinite joy is lost to the world by the want of culture of this spiritual endowment. Suppose that I were to visit a cottage, and to see its walls lined with the choicest pictures of Raphael, and every spare nook filled with statues of the most exquisite workmanship, and that I were to learn that neither man, woman, nor child ever cast an eye at these miracles of art, how should I feel their privation! how should I want to open their eyes, and to help them to comprehend and feel the loveliness and grandeur which in vain courted their notice! But every husbandman is living in sight of the works of a diviner artist; and how much would his existence be elevated, could he see the glory which shines forth in their forms, hues, proportions, and moral expression! I have spoken only of the beauty of nature; but how much of this mysterious charm is found in the elegant arts, and especially in literature? The best books have most beauty. The greatest truths are wronged if not linked with beauty, and they win their way most surely and deeply into the soul when arrayed in this their natural and fit attire. Now, no man receives the true culture of a man, in whom the sensibility to the beautiful is not cherished; and I know of no condition in life from which it should be excluded. Of all luxuries this is the cheapest and most at hand; and it seems to me to be most important to those conditions where coarse labour tends to give a grossness to the mind. From the diffusion of the sense of beauty in ancient Greece, and of the taste for music in modern Germany, we learn that the people at large may partake of refined gratifications which have hitherto been thought to have been necessarily restricted to a few."

He is here indicating a department in which, perhaps, self-cultivation is more difficult than in others; because this perception of beauty must have attained to some degree of strength in the individual before he will think it worth cultivation—before he will have the impulse to provide its due amount of gratification, and bring it to a higher degree of perfection. The way in which this should be done is very indefinitely pointed out by Dr. Channing. The ways in which the multitudes are to be acted upon in relation to it indicate themselves when we consider the different states of society. What made the exquisite taste of Greece? Why had the lowest citizen of Athens a more refined and intense enjoyment in the sculptured marbles of his city than is now the portion of any but a very few? It was that from his early childhood he was accustomed to those forms of grandeur and of beauty, and turned away with something like disgust from imperfection and deformity—it was that, as he walked the streets of Athens, these forms of marble were with him and around him—that they lined his way with their majestic presence—that he passed through them, in their different positions, until he arrived at those temples where the most complete and finished and majestic of all were enshrined for public homage; these accustomed his eyes to the contemplation of beauty, of proportion, and of majesty—they gave his senses the habit of delighting in that which was the most worthy to minister to their gratification. And so in Catholic countries. How much more appreciation is there of painting in Catholic countries than in any others! Why? Because their churches are ever open—because those churches are the receptacles of the works of their greatest masters, consecrated to religion, and creating a species of religion by their own influence upon taste and intellect; there all which the finest minds have imagined of the most spiritual characters and of the most glorious and absolute realities are presented, may be visited any day and any hour, may be gazed upon for any length of time, until it seems as if the genius with which they are imbued emanated from them, penetrating the minds of admiring and adoring crowds around, and became a portion of their being, inspiring them with a respect for works of art, for its want of which our own country is notorious. Hence, in the

fiercest struggles of the revolution of 1830, every work of art was safe; the gallery in which they were collected might be stormed alternately by the contending parties, but no rude hand was raised against them, no wanton outrage was committed upon them—they remained as sacred as if they had been themselves conscious, and had demanded the veneration due to genius.

Something is done in this country by the throwing open of museums and exhibitions that used to be closed, and only accessible by the universal passport of money—something is done by the multiplication of cheap engravings, especially those which, merely giving the faint outlines that have been either chiselled in marble or sketched upon canvas, require not the high finish that would prevent the furnishing them to the public at a cheap rate; and there can be no doubt that these are working their way, and, by affording materials for general cultivation, are applying a stimulus to self-culture in many and many an individual. Means are possessed to a much greater extent than formerly—the facilities for locomotion are amongst the aids to this species of improvement; they render nations accessible—they open a communication between regions that had seemed to be permanently alienated from one another—and the denizens of a city may now know that there is such a thing as the country, and, escaping for a while from the works of man, may see something of the works of God; and as those who have to toil for the means of subsistence—and who have to add to this toil for the means of intellectual subsistence—as they can avail themselves of these opportunities, and as, being free for a brief breathing-time from both their bodily and their intellectual labour, they can resign themselves and give themselves up to the sights and sounds which Nature has provided, not merely for the recreation, but for the culture of her children,—as they do this, they may feel the influences of nature stealing in upon them, like those of art or of genius at other times, and may ascertain, perhaps, that the best mode of cultivation for the sense of beauty is simply to throw the human mind and heart open to the impression which it naturally makes.

I shall read only one other extract, which relates to the condition in life of those to whom this lecture on self-culture is addressed—to the notion of some very foolish

and prejudiced persons, that mental cultivation tends to alienate the multitude from their daily occupation, and perhaps to a sense of the degradation which some of the more sensitive-minded of that class might themselves feel.

"It is said, that any considerable education lifts men above their work, makes them look with disgust on their trade as mean and low, makes drudgery intolerable. I reply, that a man becomes interested in labour just in proportion as the mind works with the hands. An enlightened farmer, who understands agricultural chemistry, the laws of vegetation, the structure of plants, the properties of manures, the influences of climate, who looks intelligently on his work, and brings his knowledge to bear on exigencies, is a much more cheerful as well as more dignified labourer than the peasant, whose mind is akin to the clod on which he treads, and whose life is the same dull, unthinking, unimproving toil. But this is not all. Why is it, I ask, that we call manual labour low, that we associate with it the idea of meanness, and think that an intelligent people must scorn it? The great reason is, that in most countries so few intelligent people have been engaged in it. Once let cultivated men plough and dig and follow the commonest labours, and ploughing and digging and trades will at once cease to be mean; it is the man who determines the dignity of the occupation, not the occupation which measures the dignity of the man. Physicians and surgeons perform operations less cleanly than fall to the lot of most mechanics. I have seen distinguished chemists covered with dust, like a labourer. Still these men were not degraded: their intelligence gave dignity to their work; and so our labourers, once educated, will give dignity to their toil. Let me add, that I see little difference, in point of dignity, between the various vocations of men. When I see a clerk spending his days in adding figures, perhaps merely copying; or a teller of a bank counting money; or a merchant selling shoes and hides,—I cannot see in these occupations greater respectableness than in making leather, shoes, or furniture. I do not see in them greater intellectual activity than in several trades. A man in the field seems to have more chances of improvement in his work than a man behind the counter, or a man driving the quill. It is the sign of a narrow mind to imagine, as many seem

to do, that there is a repugnance between the plain, coarse exterior of a labourer and mental culture, especially the more refining culture. The labourer, under his dust and sweat, carries the grand elements of humanity, and he may put forth its highest powers. I doubt not, there is as genuine enthusiasm in the contemplation of nature, and in the perusal of works of genius, under a homespun garb as under finery. We have heard of a distinguished author, who never wrote so well as when he was full-dressed for company; but profound thought and poetical inspiration have most generally visited men when, from narrow circumstances, or negligent habits, the rent coat and shabby face have made them quite unfit for polished saloons. A man may see truth, and may be thrilled with beauty, in one costume or dwelling as well as in another; and he should respect himself the more for the hardships under which the intellectual force has been developed."

The truth and soundness of these passages require no illustration. If any thing could be added to them, it may, perhaps, be comprised in this circumstance, that the most gifted and elevated of human minds must often have been employed usefully and honourably, and under a sense of duty, in ways which to them were quite as much of drudgery as driving the plough or working the loom.

It was not merely in the task of school-keeping that Milton showed how his heart was wrung. To the author of *Comus, Samson Agonistes,* and *Paradise Lost,* it must have been a drudgery as hard as this, when he felt himself bound, in the actual circumstances of the country, to argue the plainest principles—to put forth eloquent pamphlets on questions which must have seemed to him to be bringing down the wings of his genius, though he felt that the work of the day was incumbent upon him, and that it was not for him to shrink from its performance. There is no degradation in fulfilling whatever belongs to our nature or circumstances, whether they call us to lofty meditation or to the humblest mechanical occupation—whether they allow us to expatiate in regions where we are most sure of finding the most exquisite species of enjoyment, or whether there is to be done the daily toil of hand or of mind which is requisite for the provision of daily sustenance—or, not less requisite, in the struggle of

truth with error, of good with evil, and of right with oppression. Man is made what he is, and placed where he is, by Him who understands our frame as He constructs it, by Him who beholds our ultimate destiny of the highest good and glory, and whom we may perceive in the humblest duties that He enjoins as well as in the noblest aspirations that He excites.

ON THE OBSERVANCE OF LENT.

February 24th, 1839.

Superstitions are generally natural feeling and tendency run to seed. They originate in some emotion which forces itself into external expression, and then is taken advantage of by those who would direct all the faculties of human nature to their own purposes. It is chiefly so far as they are regulated and prescribed that they deserve the name of superstitions. I had occasion to show something of this a few Sundays ago, in a lecture upon the recent legal proceedings in reference to praying for the dead. A grave—the grave of one who has been long known and loved—is a hallowed place; the spirit seems there still to hold communion with the departed, and it feels that there is one God of the dead and of the living. Pray for the dead—and so employed, you desire their prayers also; and from this root have gradually sprung up various expressions which churches have taken under their own peculiar care and direction, and by their instructions, by their rules, and by the purpose to which they turn such feelings, have converted what at first was merely natural into something arbitrary, superstitious, and too often degrading to human nature.

It is the same with that adoration of creeds which is the source of so much intolerance and persecution. The different forms of bigotry which have connected themselves with profession of faith are resolvable into a great and natural principle, into a sense of the importance of truth—a sense which had long lain dormant in the world—which had given way to feelings of utter disregard for almost all forms of verity—such views as were condensed into the jeering question of Pilate to Christ, "What is truth?"—and Christianity revived this latent feeling—called it again into

just and useful exercise. Most men feel the love of truth, and the importance of truth; and by the perversion of this correct feeling arose the different forms of the imposition of man's opinions upon others—the endeavour to enforce articles of faith and forms of worship, and to treat unjustly and cruelly those who would not assent to such formularies. And when calamity has fallen with all its first force upon the soul, or when we look back upon bygone sorrows that still leave their traces behind, and cast their shade of melancholy over our thoughts,—what more natural, what so inevitable, as that man should be indisposed towards the sights and sounds of merriment—that he should shun society, disregard and loathe his food—that, in other words, he should be in a state of fasting and humiliation? But with this, as with all the rest, theologians have interfered—they have put it under rules—they have set it by the clock—they have determined its forms—they have discriminated between the different kinds of food, vegetable and animal, flesh and fish, and so on—they have allowed one species, they have disallowed another—and they have converted the whole into an arrant superstition—only serviceable, in such forms, for the purposes of priestcraft.

The Orientals were firm fasters, and it was probably less an inconvenience to them than could be the case with the inhabitants of colder regions, where animal food is more essential to bodily health. We find that the Jews, through the greater part of their history, have left traces of a practice of this description—although a voluntary one; for there was no fast established by their law, except that of one day in the year—the great day of expiation; but when their rabbins began to prescribe ceremonies, this was, of course, one of the first that was taken advantage of, and fastings were universally enjoined. They were to begin at an early age—in men at the age of thirteen, in women at that of eleven,—still imposing, as is the custom of brute strength, the heaviest burden upon the feeblest physical constitutions; while the Samaritans, going beyond Jewish zeal in some things, compelled even their very infants to fast—reminding us of what Virgil said, that his cattle fasted when Cæsar died.

The Mahometans observe rigorously one month of fasting in the year, and they fast with a strictness that is

unknown to modern Christians—they abstain throughout the entire natural day, from the dawn of morning to the rising of the stars, from eating, from drinking, and even from smoking; and so strict are the observances of the Turkish fasts, that instances have been known in which the drinking wine during the sacred month of Rhamadan has been punished by pouring melted lead down the throat of the offender. There have been instances of very severe laws and cruel proceedings in nominal Christendom for the support of observances of this description; and as a specimen of this, I shall mention one which is recorded by Dr. Jortin in his *Remarks upon Ecclesiastical History*. The law which he speaks of was enacted in France in the time of Charlemagne. "In the Capitulary published in France by Charles the Great, bishops, abbots, and abbesses are forbidden to keep fools, buffoons, and jugglers for their diversion." Seneca would have told these prelates that they might always be secure of a *fool* at hand for their entertainments. In the above-mentioned Capitulary there is this rigid law: "*Si quis sanctum Quadragesimale Jejunium pro despectu Christianitatis contemserit, morte moriatur.*" Upon this law Baluzius comments in the following manner: "It is indeed a great severity to put a man to death for despising the Lent fast. But amongst a contumacious people, such rigour was necessary to keep them from relapsing perpetually into paganism. In the time of Ditmarus, Bishop of Maritzpurg, it was a law amongst the Poles, that he who ate flesh in the season of Lent should have his teeth pulled out." This severity was not, I apprehend, the best way of accomplishing its own professed purpose. Kindness wins more upon the human heart, even on the most idolatrous, and, as they would sometimes be from their position in the scale of civilisation, the most savage nations; and Dr. Jortin records a circumstance in the very next page which might have indicated a better course: "Arnon, Archbishop of Salzburg, converted many of the Sclavonians, who became very fond of him"—not by pulling out their teeth when they offended against the fast, but by finding exercise for them at his own habitual feast. "He used to make all the Christian slaves come and dine at his own table, and gave them drink out of gilt cups; whilst their pagan masters sat without-doors on the ground, like dogs, and had meat

and drink placed before them. When they asked him why they were thus treated, the answer was, 'As you have not been washed in the salutary bath (that is, not baptised), you are not worthy to sit and eat at table with those who are regenerated.' Upon this, they desired also to be instructed, and admitted to baptism." And were missionaries to pursue such a course generally, there is no doubt that great progress would be made in the conversion of savage and heathen nations.

As to the particular fast, the continuous fast, which constitutes the subject of our present lecture—Lent—I do not know that I can give a more condensed account of its history than by a few quotations from Dr. Priestley:

"The primitive Christians," he says, "had no festivals besides Sunday—on which they always met for public worship—as may be inferred from Justin Martyr. This day, Constantine ordered to be observed as a day of rest from labour; but husbandmen were allowed to cultivate the earth on that day. By degrees, however, in imitation of the Jews or heathens—but chiefly the latter—Christians came to have as many annual festivals as the heathens themselves.

"The first that was observed by Christians was *Easter*, on the time of the Jewish passover—being the anniversary of our Saviour's sufferings, death, and resurrection. Originally, however, this was probably a *festival*, and respected the resurrection of our Saviour only; but afterwards they began to keep a *fast* on the anniversary of the crucifixion: but it was a long time before this fast was extended, as it now is, to the whole season of *Lent*, or forty days before Easter.

"The primitive Christians used, indeed, to join fasting to prayer upon extraordinary occasions; but this was always voluntary, and those who entirely omitted it were not censured. The first person who is said to have laid down any express rules for fasting was Montanus—who was remarkable for his rigour in other respects. However, a fast on the anniversary of Christ's crucifixion—or what we call *Good Friday*—is of very great antiquity; but both the time and the degree of fasting were originally very various—depending upon each person's particular fancy. Irenæus says, that some persons fasted before Easter one day,

some two, and some more; but that the unity of the faith was maintained notwithstanding that variety.

"By fasting, the ancients always meant abstaining from meat and drink from morning till evening; and what Tertullian and others call *stations*, or half fasts, were those days on which they assembled for prayer in the morning, and continued that exercise till three in the afternoon, when they received the Lord's supper. They never fasted on a Saturday or Sunday, and even thought it a crime to do so —except on the Saturday before Easter-day, on which they celebrated the resurrection of Christ."

He then shows that the original time of fasting was forty hours—that is, the time that Christ laid in the grave in the garden of the Arimathean; and this was afterwards enlarged into forty days, which, at first, included Sundays; but, as it was not lawful to fast on the Sundays, "Pope Gregory (the Great) added to Lent four days of the week before-going, viz. that which we now call *Ash-Wednesday*, and the three days following it; so that our present Lent is a superstitious imitation of our Saviour's fast of forty days." In the summary of this chapter, he says:

"Our established Church has by no means thrown off the Popish superstition with regard to fasting. The fast-days in the Church of England are all the Fridays in the year, except Christmas-day; all the days in Lent, which, besides Fridays, are thirty-three; six more in the Ember-weeks; three Rogation-days; and the thirtieth of January. The sum of all the festival-days is thirty-one. And if to these we add the ninety-five fast-days, fifty-two Sundays, and twenty-nine saints' days, all the days in a year appropriated to religious exercises, besides vigils, will be one hundred and seventy-eight; and making allowance for some of them interfering with others, they will be about one hundred and seventy.

"In so little esteem, however," he adds, "are these observances held by the more enlightened members of the established Church, that there can be no doubt but that, when any reformation takes place, a great retrenchment will be made in this article."

Since that time, for the purposes of business in a commercial country like this, the number of public holidays has been materially reduced; but the Church retains its calendar

as it was in the popish time—forms are kept up, although more than ever they are shown to be empty forms; and Priestley's phraseology may still be adopted, that these things will be made more rational and consistent with truth and real religion whenever any reformation shall take place. When that may be, the Church does not seem in any hurry to ascertain, and it will probably only be ascertained by the uplifting of the imperative voice of public opinion, declaring that mere conventionalism shall no longer usurp the honours of national religion.

And now let us inquire what the Church means by this observance of Lent: on what authority is this fast imposed? Does the Church of England derive it from the Romish Church, or does the Church of England prescribe it on its own authority? That it is not in the New Testament—either as a matter of precept or as a matter of fact—is quite clear: that ultimate authority, therefore, to which all the different kinds of sectarians appeal, is out of the question, and we must seek it elsewhere. It comes from Rome—it existed in the Church of Rome long anterior to the uprising of the Church of England; and, as a matter of fact merely, from the Church of Rome the Church of England has it—this Protestant Church of England; this Church of England which hates the Pope, and calls him Antichrist, yet observes his institutions; it tells us in one breath that the Pope is the man of sin, and yet that fast which his Church has instituted is the way of righteousness—it points to the description in the epistle to the Thessalonians, and shows us that Popery is to be abjured as a heresy that commands to abstain from meats, and then it says that command is to be observed, and that during the season of Lent its rejected authority is to be paramount—it represents the followers of the Papal Church as unfit to be recognised as good citizens in human society, and yet it adopts from their Church superstitious rules in order to form citizens that shall associate in the heavenly Jerusalem with the spirits of just men made perfect. And this strange incongruity is as hollow and corrupt in its original purpose as it is devoid of reason in its theory. The fasts and other observances of the Church of Rome were retained in what was called the English Reformed Church for the sake of catching consciences, and the attendance and support, or the neutrality at least, of those

who adhered to the old religion, and who then formed so large a portion of the population of this country. Up to the fourteenth year of the reign of Queen Elizabeth, there was a system regularly acted on for the inclusion of the Roman Catholic within the boundaries of the new established Church: there was so much temporising with this subject, that even the papal power itself was disposed to look with a very favourable eye upon the Church of England; and perhaps the schism might have been healed, and the reunion of these nearly allied Churches might have been accomplished, but for one point—a point which such a reforming sovereign as Queen Elizabeth was much indisposed to concede—and that was the point of authority: the supremacy of the temporal authority of the ruler in this country in religious matters would have been precluded by the return to the spiritual allegiance which was formerly rendered to the Roman pontiff; and on this the whole matter hinged. When it was found impracticable to combine supremacy with these superstitious observances, all idea of union was given up: the superstitions were retained; but, instead of conciliation, a spirit of persecution arose—concessions were denied to Protestant Dissenters which had previously been made to the Roman Catholics; the Church assumed its permanent form, and then it evinced its permanent spirit of hostility to those who differed from it, whether from veneration for that which was old, or from convictions which were marked by novelty.

But disowning as the Church does that authority, we cannot ascribe to it that it keeps Lent because it is a Roman-Catholic fast. It does it, then, on its own authority—the authority of the Church of England; and where is the Church of England to be found, and how has the Church of England shown that on this point it exercises its authority? for the Church means not merely the ministers of the Church, but the people who constitute that Church: and when have they been congregated together in solemn synod to declare that they would fast forty days before Easter? There was a time when the House of Commons might be reckoned by representation the Church of England—when the Catholics had not yet separated—when the Dissenters had not yet broken off, and formed their distinct communions. Then it might be said that the whole population were members

of the Church of England, and that these were their representatives; but never by the Parliament of England was the authority of decreeing rites and ceremonies conveyed to the priests of the Church. It is an authority that rests on a forgery. The twentieth article of the Church of England begins by declaring that "The Church hath power to decree rites or ceremonies, and authority in controversies of faith." That first clause of the twentieth article is not in the copy subscribed solemnly by the archbishops, bishops, and clergy in Convocation assembled—it is not even in the earliest-printed Latin copies of the Thirty-nine Articles. It was surreptitiously introduced, nobody knows when, how, or by whom; and yet in these words, thus fraudulently incorporated in what professes to be the solemn exposition of the nation's religious faith—in that clause is to be found all the authority for imposing observances which are not prescribed in the New Testament. Forgery—which in commerce is reckoned such a crime, that it used almost invariably to bring men to the gallows—in theology may pass for such a virtue that it exercises the power of directing a nation's praying and fasting.

To ascertain the views of the Church on such a matter as this, we may refer to an accredited and very popular work, Nelson on the *Festivals and Fasts of the Church of England,* and we may inquire of this work the reason for this particular time of forty days. This book is written in the form of question and answer, and the writer puts this inquiry—"Why was the solemn season of humiliation limited to forty days?" The answer is—"The Church had, I suppose, a respect to *forty* days, as what was esteemed a proper *Penitential Season;* which seems very anciently to have been appropriated to *Humiliation.* For, not to reckon up the *forty days* in which God drowned the world; or the *forty years* in which the children of Israel did penance in the wilderness; or the *forty stripes*"—it ought to have been forty save one—"by which malefactors were to be corrected;—whoever considers that Moses did not *once* only fast this number of days; that Elias also fasted in the wilderness the same space of time; that the Ninevites had precisely as many days allowed for their repentance; and that our blessed Saviour himself, when he was pleased to fast, observed the same length of time,—whoever

considers these facts, cannot but think that this number of days was used by them all as the common solemn number belonging to extraordinary humiliation, and that those were accustomed to afflict themselves *forty days* who would deprecate any great and heavy judgment."

Now, really this is going into a very old superstition—a superstition in philosophy as well as in religion—which led to the belief that some sort of magic charm existed in particular numbers. The number forty, however, is by no means one of the most impressive of these, and therefore we cannot hold the reasoning here to be altogether sound. Surely, seven would have been a much more sacred number; for are there not seven days in the week, and were there not then supposed to be only seven planets, and seven angels standing before the throne of God, and seven wonders of the world, and seven wise men of Greece, and many more sevens, which might be placed in long array, outrivalling all the forties these advocates of Lent are able to produce? There is, indeed, an authority to which they might have appealed, which is not inappropriate—that of the poet, who says—

"At thirty, man suspects himself a fool;
Knows it at forty, and reforms his plan."

We now ask something of the manner as well as of the time. "After what manner did the Primitive Christians observe their fasts in Lent?" The answer is—"There was variety in their manner of fasting as well as in the number of their days. In the Holy Week, they that were strict would eat nothing but bread, and water, and salt, or nuts and almonds, or such-like fruits, which was called the *dry diet*. In the rest of *Lent*, some abstained from flesh and wine; and others forbore all fish likewise as well as flesh, which was the custom of the Greeks. Some contented themselves with eggs and fruits, others forbore both, and lived upon bread, herbs, and roots; and in this variety they agreed in one thing, which was, not to eat till the evening, and then such food as was least delicate." Whether the authorities of the Church hold on to this last single point of the agreement, or which of the varieties described they adopt as the most orthodox form of keeping Lent, we have no means of ascertaining; nor have they favoured the public with such directions as are desirable about the diet,

whether dry or not, which should be adopted after going without food, as we must presume every good member of the Church does, from morning till evening; for unless this be done, what have we but the exhibition of a nation, through all its ranks and gradations, secular and clerical, holding out in the formularies of religion, as an established annual practice, that which they do not practise, though they thus declare it before God and man?

Lent, with the primitive Church, was a season of penance, and this was enjoined with peculiar strictness. "What was the discipline of the Primitive Church at the beginning of Lent?" Answer—"That such persons as stood convicted of notorious crimes were put to open penance. For, according to the ancient discipline, those who after baptism fell into any great and notorious sins, if they were penitents, were admitted to penance, and to the prayers of the Church for their reconciliation with God. But if they were refractory sinners, or their crimes of a deep dye, they were excommunicated, and not admitted to reconciliation with the Church, but after a long and tedious course of penance, after the most public testimonies of sorrow and repentance, and the greatest signs of humiliation that can be imagined. For Tertullian tells us, They lay in sackcloth and ashes;"—that practice, indeed, was the origin of the name of the day, "Ash-Wednesday," the day on which Lent begins;—"they disfigured their bodies with a neglected uncleanness, and dejected their minds with grief; they used no other food but what was necessary to keep up life, and frequently nourished their prayers with rigorous fasting; they groaned, they wept to the Lord their God day and night, they fell down at the feet of the presbyters, they kneeled to the friends of God, and begged of all their fellow-Christians to pray for them." These signs of humiliation have passed away, and the good man tells us that, instead of them, we have now recourse to the Commination, or denouncing of curses, which is always used in the Church at the commencement of Lent, and which is introduced with a remarkable preface, that is indeed a portion of the service, and that shows how the Church looks back with a longing eye to those good old times when it exercised more power: "After Morning Prayer, the Litany ended according to the accustomed

manner, the priest shall, in the reading-pew or pulpit, say: Brethren, in the primitive Church there was a godly discipline, that, at the beginning of Lent, such persons as stood convicted of notorious sin were put to open penance, and punished in this world, that their souls might be saved in the day of the Lord; and that others, admonished by their example, might be the more afraid to offend. Instead whereof (until the said discipline may be restored again, which is much to be wished) it is thought good that at this time, in the presence of you all, should be read the general sentences of God's cursing against impenitent sinners," and so on.

Now, for about three centuries has the Church solemnly repeated, every Lent, that it is very much indeed to be wished that discipline should be restored, and penance again inflicted. It is strange that so many priestly wishes and prayers—those of the ten thousand ordained ministers in this country, besides the branches of the Church of England in other countries—that their solemnly expressed wish to the Deity every year through three centuries should neither have prevailed on Providence, by some peculiar interposition, to reëstablish this discipline or penance, nor should have stimulated those who, in his presence, express the desire, to reëstablish it themselves by their own spiritual authority. One does not read, from the establishment of the Protestant Church of England to the present time, that its ministers or its prelates have been forward to subject nobility or royalty to the sort of penance which the old Church sometimes inflicted. It would indeed have been a somewhat perilous thing for any one to have talked of making Queen Elizabeth, for instance, submit to penance. She would have sworn to "unfrock" him very promptly, unless such wish had been recanted, perhaps on his knees. It has never been by the Church of England—it was by the old Romish Church—that the reality and regularity of discipline were shown. That Church made the loftiest of the world bow to its command, and its monks laid their lashes on the bare backs of sovereigns at the shrines of the bishops who had been sacrificed by their ambition, and made emperors stand barefooted and bareheaded, shivering in the snow, at the entrances of their castles, before they were allowed to kiss the Pope's

foot, and receive pardon and absolution. These, indeed, were the days of discipline and penance, which, in the hands of such a body, a subservient body like the Church of England, dwindle into mere forms, and the wreaking of a sort of petty spite upon those who cannot resist. What remains, what faint and dim shadow remains, of this ancient penance, to which the mightiest and the noblest were compelled to bow? All that we find is, that actors, if they have the misfortune to practise their profession within the jurisdiction of the Lord Chamberlain, must be shorn of two days in the week in their living; and that in extra sermons, which are generally produced at this season of the year, the Unitarian heresy—that of a few thousands of persons in the country—is selected for the most remarkable displays of orthodox zeal and learning. This is most pitiful. It is as in ancient times. Kings and nations transgressed what they held to be the Divine law, and so some poor ruminating ox had its throat cut at the altar, or some wretched goat was laden with their sins and turned adrift into the wilderness. Truly, the Church, in this representation of religion, seems distinctly and devoutly to adopt the orthodoxy of the Pharisees in our Lord's time—"I fast twice in the week, and give tithes of all that I possess:" and though his fasting was on Mondays and Thursdays, and ours on Wednesdays and Fridays, I apprehend that makes but little difference,—especially while tithing is preserved in its most orthodox and universal form.

Now let us look at the "Commination," which is to be the substitute for this ancient and godly discipline. It runs thus: "Cursed is the man that maketh any carved or molten image, to worship it. Cursed is he that curseth his father and mother. Cursed is he that removeth his neighbour's landmark. Cursed is he that maketh the blind to go out of his way. Cursed is he that perverteth the judgment of the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow. Cursed is he that smiteth his neighbour secretly. Cursed is he that lieth with his neighbour's wife. Cursed is he that taketh reward to slay the innocent. Cursed is he that putteth his trust in man, and taketh man for his defence, and in his heart goeth from the Lord. Cursed are the unmerciful, fornicators, and adulterers, covetous persons, idolaters, slanderers, drunkards, and extortioners." To all which the

people answer, "Amen." Truly, the repetition of these curses, however enormous may be some of the offences to which they relate, does not appear to me to be a very wholesome or religious exercise, nor particularly adapted to cherish either benevolence or sincerity. It does not express the true feeling and morality of this country: for, instead of "Cursed is he that smiteth his neighbour secretly," I believe the most common morality of the land in which we live would say, "Cursed is he that smiteth his neighbour so that it is found out." The curse of smiting "the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow," should be, if it means any thing, a grave admonition as to all legal proceedings, that they be rendered such as to protect those who are the most defenceless, and be easy of access and prompt in their remedy for all that are injured. But the curse to which I would most particularly direct your notice is that which comes the third in order—"Cursed is he that removeth his neighbour's landmark." In Judæa this curse had a meaning. The land was apportioned out—first, amongst the tribes, and then amongst their families—at the original settlement in Canaan, by the constitution of the Jewish polity. It was desired to avoid all great inequalities of property and condition; it was a leading object to keep the country, and the different tribes that inhabited it, precisely in the same relative state as at first. Hence, no land could be permanently alienated. Every fiftieth year—at the year of jubilee—to whomsoever it might be sold, or for whatever price, or under whatever circumstances, the land came back again to the representatives of the family to whom it originally belonged; and by this arrangement the Jewish people were kept, comparatively, a thin population, and they had none of those enormous distinctions of very rich and very poor that have so abounded in modern nations. Even the term beggar was unknown to the language of the ancient Hebrews. In such a state of society this curse had a manifest propriety. Their ancient landmarks, the testimonies to the original distribution of the country, were the assertion of the permanent rights of families. Their removal was a fraud. But how does such a thing apply to our state of society? Why, in England, should a man be cursed that removes his neighbour's landmark? So far as the spirit of the maledic-

tion has any application, the curse should fall upon those who in any way, legislative or otherwise, endeavour to keep up and aggravate the inequalities of society. It is a curse upon all who struggle against the equality, or the nearly equal condition, of the entire community—that is to say, it is a curse, by wholesale, upon the classes that have had the most influence in enacting the law of this country, or in giving to it the spirit by which it is animated. If we take it literally, that we have a solemnly pronounced curse in our churches upon every person that is implicated in the removal of a landmark, involving a change in family possessions, consider on whom it would fall. To work it out in detail—to express it in words, as the clergy should do, to be understood—it would be, Cursed be the House of Lords for every such law as that which facilitates the cutting off of entails—cursed be the House of Commons for reading a first, second, and third time, and passing into a law, any thing that affects the previous possession of landed property—cursed be the monarch, king or queen, that to any such law affixes the royal assent—cursed be the judge and jury, in any court of justice, that authorise transactions by which land passes out of one family into another—cursed be all the purchasers of land, from whatever motive, whether it be just or unjust, kind or unkind—cursed be the lawyers that engross the documents by which the transition of the titles of such property is ascertained—and cursed be all the agents that are employed to take possession, and to make this property pass from its old possessors into the hands of its new inheritors. Such would it be, if drawn out. But if the Church does not mean this, why does it solemnly call on Heaven to witness that which has no rational meaning or application to our present state of society? But is it not a profanation that such words should be uttered, whether with or without religion? Can there be any true worship to a Being of infinite benignity in this formal recital of curses? can there be any good done to any human spirit by this piling up of maledictions, causelessly, unknowingly, irrationally? What is a curse? In the full meaning of the word, a curse is an invocation of calamity, of bitter and scathing calamity, on the individual denounced—not only external calamity, but inward and spiritual agony—not only the

sufferings of this world, but the supposed eternal torments of the world to come; and these awful things are hurled about as if it were mere child's play, or as if it were something conventional and formal, in which it is not necessary to have a meaning. Could, I will not say the omniscient God, but a superior being, or he, the man of Nazareth, who taught his followers to bless and curse not, look down on such scenes as this, only the elevation of his purer nature could prevent indignant loathing at the profanation thus carried through the forms of national religion. If it were true that curses, like chickens, come home to roost, what would be the condition of our churches? All other things would be banished thence, the rooks would find no room for their nests, and every cathedral of the country would be a cage of unclean birds.

I do not mean, in these remarks, to say any thing whatever against commemorating past events in a mournful as well as in a joyous manner, when the mind and feeling honestly take that direction. Let us have our days, which we may call days of feasting or of fasting, without superstition, which bring themselves home to our minds with their bright or with their gloomy hues—the birthdays of friendship or of love, or the memories of those who are gone, and at whose graves we would render the expression of the feelings which they excited in their lives, and which now cast their long shadow upon our own being—let the year be sacred to the recollection of national as well as individual events—let it bring to mind the victories that freedom has achieved in past times, when our forefathers wrung the concession of their liberties, and bequeathed those liberties to their offspring, or when they exercised awful retribution on those who, holding the highest power in the realm, had dared to pervert that power to its grossest abuse,—let us keep times either in gladness or in thankfulness; or, with regret for their unmerited sufferings, let us celebrate the days of poets and philosophers, of all who have contributed to the world's good,—sometimes contributing to it by their own toil and weariness through many a lengthened year, or by aggravated suffering and, it may be, by ignominious death. Let us write upon the revolving year the history of the pure and blessed Teacher who went about continually doing good,—let his tempta-

tions, his trials, his sufferings, and his glory, be recorded there; but let it be in his spirit—the spirit of blessing, and not of cursing—the spirit of truthfulness, and not of mere conventionalism; for he sought no such reciprocity as this superstition seems to require. If he fasted, it was not that his disciples should fast, but that they might rejoice. He died, that men might live,—he mourned, that men might be glad,—he fasted in body, that his followers might feast in spirit,—he wore a crown of thorns, that humanity might gather its chaplet of roses,—and he was alone in the wilderness for forty days, that his followers might be with him through eternal ages in the gardens of paradise.

The term Lent is said to be derived from a Saxon word, meaning "spring-time." Spring-time is a season of joy. The year and the Church are at issue as to the appropriate meaning of this season. Nature is full of revival. The flowers are beginning to force their way through the incumbent clods—the leaf-buds are on the late bare branches of the trees—the waters flow on freely and sparklingly—the voice of nature on every side resounds, "Awake, arise, rejoice!" "No," says the Church; "put on the garments of humiliation, and bow yourselves down to the dust." Nature begins to be full of variety, and brings out in gradual succession its beautiful contrasts of colour—it makes the air vocal with its variety of sounds—its feathered choristers keep no Lent, nor are under any restriction—it paints its scenes in all their grand diversity of colouring, and over all spreads the hues of life and animation; while the Church orders the garments of mourning to be put on to the body, and the spirit of heaviness to take possession of the soul. Nature is full of benevolence: it shows us the love of God in every dawning morn that the advancing season displays—it exhibits itself to our contemplation as replete with the sounds and signs of love; while the Church lifts up the voice of cursing, and calls on heaven and earth to listen to its redoubled maledictions. In nature it is the time of hope and of glad expectancy: every thing shows the progress onward; but the Church looks back, commanding man to dwell upon the past, to dwell upon it with those feelings of deep self-humiliation which cripple the energies of humanity, and are the greatest impediments to its ad-

vance. The Ember-days, at the beginning of Lent, are days that are set apart for the purposes of ordination, for the ordination of priests and deacons—the Ember-days which occur in the commencement of this fast, and in connection with some other of the sacred times that are observed by the Church of England; then it is that her prelates, by the imposition of hands, profess to give the Holy Spirit. And then it is, too, that nature ordains her priests—that the benignant influences of nature, beaming in upon the soul through the senses, communicate poetic inspiration, and call upon man to rise from things material to things spiritual, and to see in God's fair and lovely world admonitions to the exercise of his spiritual faculties in that loftier world towards which he naturally aspires. And now, turning from the priests and deacons of the Church of England, I shall close this lecture with a few lines from one of nature's own priests, one who ministered at her shrine, even when his own sight was dimmed, and he could no longer behold the glories which yet he had the power of painting. Milton, in his "Sonnet to Cyriac Skinner," thus describes the use to which a natural season of enjoyment should be put:

"Cyriac, whose grandsire on the royal bench
Of British Themis, with no mean applause
Pronounced, and in his volumes taught, our laws,
Which others at their bar so often wrench:
To-day deep thoughts resolve with me to drench
In mirth, that after no repenting draws;
Let Euclid rest, and Archimedes pause,
And what the Swede intends, and what the French.
To measure life learn thou betimes, and know
Toward solid good what leads the nearest way;
For other things mild Heaven a time ordains.
And disapproves that care, though wise in show,
That with superfluous burden loads the day,
And, when God sends a cheerful hour, refrains."

THE DUTY OF A NATION TOWARDS ITS INTELLECTUAL BENEFACTORS.

March 3d, 1839.

The duties of individuals towards individuals, and of individuals towards a state, have occupied systems of moral philosophy, almost to the exclusion of the duties of a state towards individuals. And this omission had its reason. It was of little avail to delineate duties while there were no means for the enforcement of the obligation; while despotism could say, "I am the state," and acknowledged no responsibility except to God. There was the power of religion, indeed; but, in the application of that power, it required a Paul to make a Felix tremble—Felix, who was but a deputy despot: and the result of his trembling was only that he postponed the subject to a more convenient season. Vainly did even the apostle endeavour to write the law of God upon his heart; "righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come," were then, as often since, disposed of as a bill to be read that day six months. The state of things is better now, because in different modes, direct and indirect, the force of opinion has made itself felt by authority, and has established a moral action upon authority. The common feelings, therefore, of individuals tend to become the feelings of a community, state, or nation, and to produce their appropriate expression: and as there are many duties which it is difficult to define, which it is almost impossible to enforce,—which arise rather from the impulse of the past than from the calculations of the future,—these may be expected to be realised nationally, as they are individually, by the power of emotion, by the tendency of the common feeling that shapes to itself some form of expression, and renders homage where it feels that homage is due.

Gratitude especially belongs to this class of duties. It has often been remarked that, while it is held in the highest regard, it is not enforced by any laws. It is said that he who is ungrateful has no fault but one—all other crimes may pass for virtues in him; and yet, with this strongly marked detestation, there are no laws against ingratitude. In fact, calculation is out of the question in such a case: it can only relate, at most, to certain modifications in the mode of arousing gratitude. No calculation can inspire the feeling; and yet that feeling is one which belongs to individual duty, and to consistency and harmony of character; and which belongs not less to the duty, consistency, and harmony of the character of a state or nation. A nation's best benefactors are those who, by the exercise of their own intellectual powers, exceed the intelligence of the community. There is more availing power for good in this species of benefaction than in any other. Trophies are raised, and worthily raised, to the general whose prowess marshals the forces of a state, and leads them on to triumph—to the repelling of invasion from the confines of a land. Marks of enduring honour, memorials of permanent gratitude, are devoted to the statesman who has founded wise and just institutions; and to reformers, who have interposed when those institutions became corrupt, and restored them to their original efficacy, and invested them with new powers for human good. But what do the exertions of either avail without that power of the mind of a country which alone can give life to all its institutions, to all its forms and modes of legislation? There is a power in intellect even to rectify the evils and difficulties to which the willing benefactors of society are liable. Sometimes a nation has been conquered, in spite of all the skill or heroism of its warriors; and then the writers of that nation have conquered the conquerors, have subdued and civilised the barbarians whose physical force had availed to crush their greater refinement, and have erected their own trophy above that of the proud assailants by whom they had been subdued. Such was the case in Greece, which gave its intellectual laws to Rome, when its independence had been compelled to bow itself before the Roman arms. Such was the case in Italy, which spread refinement amongst its barbarian conquerors; and in the improve-

ments of the arts of life amongst them, and the lofty conceptions it led them to cherish through its own literature, it erected an enduring empire, that prevailed when their barbarian power of conquest had passed away. And what are institutions but lifeless forms, unless the mind of a nation, being with them, enters into their spirit, and realises their influence throughout all ranks of society?

What was the code of Moses but a nullity through many a generation, until its monarch minstrel struck the varied chords of his harp—until its royal preacher gathered the wisdom of the Proverbs from the surface of society, and penetrated into the depths of the human heart for the teachings of his Ecclesiastes—and until more than royal prophets had, by the energy of their writings, called upon the earth, and made the earth hear the word of the Lord? And so in our own country: who were they but the writers of England that gave power to its different institutions, that made its parliaments the source of social and political freedom, that raised them above the worthlessness of the parliaments of Paris, and that, by putting forth the powers of individually superior minds, led the nation on in harmony with its political advantages; while the later development of similar power in the rival country only exploded in the terrors of revolution? And not only is it in connection with institutions, and in the diffusion through social life of the power of that spirit of political freedom, that the writers of a nation are its noblest benefactors; but they create, besides this, what is properly called the spirit of a country—which, when its institutions are defective or injurious, will so counteract them as to make the character of a nation grand where they would debase it, and free where they would enslave it—and which, when it is withdrawn or partially exercised, show how unavailing are even the freest institutions. We might adduce, in illustration of such a contrast as this, the intellectual liberality and boldness of Germany—the intellectual servility and thraldom of America.

But, in discussing such a subject as that announced for this lecture, our first inquiry is, Who may properly be regarded as the intellectual benefactors of a nation? and the answer to this question will form part of the description of the duty of a nation, which I will sum up in three words

—discrimination, appreciation, and expression. To discriminate who they are, to trace the real founders of intellectual enjoyment and intellectual progress, should be one of the paramount duties of individual minds; and in a state, the aggregate decision of individual minds should be facilitated and enforced by all the means and appliances which the state can command. We cannot call the mere mechanists of literary intellect the great benefactors of a nation. There are many works which are dignified by the name of literature, which are as really mechanical as those of the commonest workings of the operative. There are books which are made, perhaps, with less skill than chairs or tables—the mere compilation and abridgment and putting together of scraps of information from this or that source, combining them into some sort of form and order, and sending the whole forth as a book—a book, indeed, it is: and very handy and useful these selections and arrangements may be; but they have no claim or title to the honourable name of literature; they often give very imperfect information of that on which they descant, and sometimes tend to mislead. These, however, will be supplied in each generation; they are easily supplied every five or seven years, as the world wants them; there is always abundance of the talent which is adequate for such a work, and it is sure of its appropriate recompense. We throw such things out of consideration in the present question, except thus far,—that even in the humblest school-book—that even in the merest abridgment of history or science for the use of the young—that in the most common-place work that can be put before us—when the hand of genius has been applied, it may always be recognised; and it gives a worth to that production which ought not to escape the eye of the discriminating observer. There is a difference in the simplest operation, when a high order of intelligence has been at work, and when it is done in a merely mechanical way, on merely mechanical principles. One might illustrate this by the different plans formed for exhibiting scripture history. A great divine has sometimes done this in a way which would scarcely do credit to the skill of a carpenter. He puts together the narratives of the book of Kings and of the book of Chronicles. By adjusting them, he makes out a continuous record of events; and he gives this to the

world as a harmony of scripture history,—never observing that, though they relate to the same persons and facts, the two books are strangely contrasted in their spirit—the one emanating from a mind free from the common prejudices of the time, and independent of priestly influence—the other breathing throughout a devotedness to the grandeur of the priesthood and the Levitical tribe. And so in the "Harmonies" of the four gospels: a mechanical hand cuts out the narrative of each parable or miracle from the four writers; he interweaves them all together; he tells us that he has formed a complete and entire life of Christ, forgetting that he has mixed in one mass of confusion the different principles and feelings with which these four biographers recorded the events of their Master's ministry,—that he has mingled together the simple Judaism of Matthew, looking only to his own country and countrymen, and thoroughly imbued with the particular views of the race of Abraham; and the proselyting Judaism of Mark, the companion of Peter, when, in his mode, he first preached Christianity to the Gentiles; and, with these two, the Oriental mysticism of the evangelist John. The way to produce a life of Christ which should have claims upon us, as distinguished from mere mechanical hand-work like this, would be by the discrimination of the critic who should note these peculiarities, and allow for the bias of each mind or class of minds in such productions. For such a work as this we go to Germany. Or next to this would be the life of Christ in which the full realisation of an individual mind should be embodied, as in Jeremy Taylor's work; where Christ seems again to live in our presence—where each fact, as it comes in succession, seems to be the scene of an almost ineffable tenderness, or of high and lofty aspirations of devotion, or of bold and generous views of human nature, of human duty, and of human destiny,—while throughout there is a life, a glowing power, that communicates itself from its dead pages to our living bosoms—makes the spirit of Christ descend upon us, as if the bishop himself stood with outspread hands over the head of the student, giving the mighty benediction of genius, imparting the holy spirit of God, and realising that at which episcopal pretension vainly strives in the profane mimicry of its ordination mummeries.

Nor do we reckon amongst the intellectual benefactors of a nation those who are merely the hirelings and advocates of a sect, a class, or a party. Unhappily, the mind which God creates in the world, and which should ever be considered as an endowment for the world's good, has often suffered under a bias from the world's temporary interests. The first form of this influence was shown in servility to despotic power, which, accustomed to reign and revel without control in all other matters, expected—and too frequently its expectation was answered—that genius should bow the knee to it. The next form was that of servility towards aristocratic patronage, such as is exhibited in the dedications of the writers of our country about two centuries and a half ago, in which we find people whose names would have gone irrecoverably into oblivion but for their having been thus preserved by those who offered to them a vain and unbecoming homage. We find them endowed with every virtue and intelligence under heaven, because they were the patrons of the poet's song; and he considered himself rather as their servant than as what he was in reality, one of the world's masters. Perhaps a still worse form than this is the homage which talent is obliged to pay, as in the United States of America, to the mere prevalence of vulgar ignorance and prejudice,—where knowledge bows down to ignorance, where genius becomes subordinate to the prevailing spirit, where the gifted few are only the ministering slaves of the intellectually unendowed many. In our own country, the form which this influence takes is that of class-interest. We are not so much a community branching out into diversity of occupations, all of which, as they have their origin in the common arrangements of society, so flow back again into the common interests of society: but we are an aggregate of classes, each existing in a state of hostility towards the rest,—each having a steady eye to its own interests and purposes, and each encouraged by the success of tyranny in one age, and of aristocracy in another, and of democracy in another,—each encouraged to think the mind a machine which it may hire, to regard it as a steam-engine, a power to be let, and each endeavouring to buy for itself such portions as it may require in order to defend its own pretensions, or to combat with the pretensions of

its neighbours. It is difficult for a book, it is more difficult for a journal, to make its way against interests of this description—it is difficult for any publication to succeed that is not linked with some interest of this description. The social classes are the masters; hired talent is the slave which they expect faithfully and vigorously to do their bidding for the sordid wages by which it is to be repaid. We cannot look upon the literary hirelings who do this work as the intellectual benefactors of a nation. Nor do we find them in the purveyors of cheap literature, for which there has been a sort of indiscriminate appetite, a blind mania, of late, in this country. Those who look only to furnishing the public with cheap literature, are not the people who furnish it with literature at all. The means which have been frequently employed—honourable exceptions there are, no doubt, and to them due honour should be paid—the means which have frequently been employed to meet the demands of the public market for this article are such that the mind recoils from them with disgust.

The reading of volumes of dulness will not kindle a spark of genius—the reading of volumes of folly will not lead man onwards towards the attainment of wisdom. We have sunk into a conventionalism in identifying intelligence so completely either with books or with scholastic education. The American savage never opened or saw a volume, he knows not a letter,—and yet he has education, instruction, the development of intelligence: as he roams through the forest, the broad and spreading and gigantic oak, with its general similarity and its minute differences, varying the shades of that forest at different periods of the day—the configuration of the constellations, and the rising or setting of the stars—these are to him the stimuli of observation; the rapid breaking up of the ice of his majestic rivers—the sudden coming upon the pitfall or precipice—the nice track, over the prairie or through the wilderness, of the animals he pursues in the chase—these teach him promptness of decision and vigour of action; while the stream stimulates his curiosity to follow its windings until he reach its fountain, or the mountain to climb to its summit, and behold the wide expanse that stretches around. Here is education—here are the stimuli of thought; and accordingly there is more thought in the savage, untutored by books,

than in men who have spent their lives in devouring such compositions as I have just described. There may even be what belongs to the higher forms of literature among those who are estranged from books. The songs of Homer lived in Grecian memories; the lays of bards and minstrels in other lands connected themselves with the hills and vales and torrents which they described; they kept up the feeling of heroic deeds and of heroic greatness—they answered the purpose of literary benefaction—while literature, in the common sense of the term, had not commenced its existence.

Nor, lastly, do we class with the intellectual benefactors of a nation those who degrade themselves to become ministers to public frivolity, licentiousness, or prejudice, for the sake of immediate gain.

Who, then—to return to the question—who are the intellectual benefactors of a nation? There needs be but little delay in answering such an inquiry. It is necessary only to cast a rapid glance over the memorials of our countrymen through a succession of ages. When a great writer like Chaucer, out of a babble of dialects, creates a language,—when he elicits order from a previously existing confusion that would defy an ordinary mind,—when he brings forth the rich melodies of language together with its sweetness, and with that sweetness its strength,—when he makes that language a fit instrument or agency for the logician to wield in the detection of error or the pursuit of truth,—when he endows it with qualities that give the patriot his power of declamation, and enable him to assert in impassioned sentences his country's rights,—when he frames it into a fitness for the historian to record the heroic deeds of worthies, or for the poet to sing the song of high aspiration,—why, him I call an intellectual benefactor of a nation. Or when a statesman like Sir Thomas More isolates himself from the concerns of time,—when he forgets clients, and suitors, and causes, and decisions,—when the commands of a monarch or the wants of a people are no longer pressing themselves on his mental vision,—when he secludes himself to ruminate, not indeed on abstractions, but on the truths and realities with which these have furnished him, and, away from all the compliances that power and station are doomed to

make, away from all the compromises which may, as he thinks, belong to the practical wisdom of his day,—when he dives down into the essentials of humanity and of society, and delineates the principles of eternal truth and justice, and with these, as in the formation of a new heaven and a new earth, realises the futurity of human nature, its destiny eventually to more perfect forms of society, and, in spite of the sarcasms of intervening ages, becomes the legislator of institutions that shall have their real existence perhaps thousands of years afterwards,—giving to the world, as a record of his anticipatory and prophetic power, such a work as the *Utopia*,—I call him, too, an intellectual benefactor to his nation. Or when the universal mind of Shakespeare metempsychoses with all the varied forms of our nature—the grotesque, the humorous, the pathetic, the grand, and the terrific—here, too, we have the intellectual benefactor of a nation, or we should rather say of the world. And when a princely mind like that of Bacon sets forth on its intellectual progress, visiting the different regions of science and of literature, opening in each its high commission to review, to examine, and to adjudicate,—again we behold a benefactor, a noble intellectual benefactor, of a nation. Or when a pure and lofty spirit, as that of Milton, imposes on itself the lowliest burdens in temporary discussions, and yet prepares to build immortal rhyme,—when its powers are directed, as duty calls, to every diversity of subject, from the grandest to the meanest, ever hearing and obeying the voice of country, of conscience, and of God,—again we feel to our heart's core that here is an intellectual benefactor of his nation. And so we might pursue this subject, calling up the names in long array of Newton, tracing the chain of physical connection throughout the material universe — of Hartley, exhibiting the finer chain that links thought with feeling, and feeling with action — of Lardner, tracing the succession of writers, Jewish, or heathen, or Christian, that bear their testimony to gospel credibility—of Bentham, whose analysis makes its way through the tangled forest of legislation, marking what is to be pruned, and what is to fall as entirely corroded by corruption—or the synthesis of a Coleridge, pursuing the reverse plan, but in perfect spiritual co-operation, and rising to the primal conception of society,

and deducing thence what must be its everlasting forms and its everlasting spirit,—in each and all of these we trace intellectual benefaction to a people. And, oh, it is pain and grief, and almost shame, to pass over so many names, and such names as must be passed over even in this transitory glance at those to whom we owe the most sacred veneration and gratitude. They almost seem to upbraid us, shadowy forms crowned with laurel, and yet many of them also scarred with the wounds of martyrdom, which in their own day was all the repayment that society had to make to them for the incalculable and everlasting benefits that they conferred. But it is not all the fulness of the heart that the mouth speaketh, it is only *out* of that fulness; to embody it all in expression would require the continuous language of praise which is claimed as man's homage to the Deity through the ages of eternity.

Had time allowed, I would have said something of the expansion and ripening of the intellectual faculties under the glowing influence of these mighty orbs of literature—I would have said something of the consolation afforded to days and nights of weariness, when, as enshrined in the form of books, their spirits kept watch around the couch of sickness, filling the murky void with beautiful and fairy forms, and the dull air with music—I would have said something of the impulse to higher and generous deeds from their realised presence in their works, making us feel that

> "Millions of spiritual beings walk the earth
> Unseen, both when we wake and when we sleep."

Where there is an appreciating gratitude, there will be expression; and I should greatly doubt, for instance, the sincerity of any professed admirer of literary works who should be content with the coarsest and cheapest edition of his own favourite author. The aggregate of individual feeling combining itself into national expression, whatever be rendered to the successful warrior, whatever be awarded to the wise statesman, or the impartial administrator of the law, whatever be given to the successful reformer,—whether it be the statue, the title, or the estate, —or whatever memorial, simple or costly, it is the nation's

custom to adopt in acknowledgment of benefits,—these, in their best and highest form, it will assuredly adopt when once it appreciates intellectual benefaction as the noblest that it receives.*

* The remainder of the lecture was occupied with answers to objections made to the Copyright Bill, then brought before Parliament by Mr. Sergeant Talfourd.

WILLIAM ROSCOE.

March 10th, 1839.

Among the men of the generation that is just passing, I suppose there are few with whom the general opinion will more readily associate the ideas of wisdom and of goodness than with the name of William Roscoe of Liverpool, the historian of Leo the Tenth and of Lorenzo the Magnificent. He is known, in the interesting course of his life, not only by his rising from one of the lowliest conditions of society towards a station in which he was looked up to by a large circle with respect; but also from the circumstance that the condition of his early life was one of those which most tend to blunt the feelings and to render gross the taste; while his own personal characteristics were those of the utmost refinement and purity of spirit and of accomplishment. He was known politically, not only by those beautiful tracts that welcomed the outburst of the French Revolution, when

> "The vine-covered hills and gay valleys of France
> Saw the day-star of liberty rise;"

but also from the circumstance of his having been a short time a member of the legislature, and during that period having drawn upon himself the bitterest unpopularity, the most unwelcome reception from the town which he represented, by his vote for the abolition of the slave-trade. He was known commercially by a long course of beneficent and useful actions, by the founding of various institutions which redeem the character of Liverpool from being merely a place of unscrupulous money-getting—by traces which will long remain impressed upon its society. In him the commercial spirit and the literary spirit fought out that warfare which has too often, unhappily, been carried on between them. A part of the commercial misfortune which befell him, and

which to him was probably the heaviest part, was the sacrifice of his library,—that collection of books which had cost him so many years to collect, which had excited so much vivid interest in his mind, which had been the source alike of so many anxieties and of so many gratifications, which had constituted the materials of his most arduous labour, and the source of his dearest enjoyments. From that he had to part, and he has commemorated his feelings in a sonnet which is probably generally known, but which I shall read as illustrative of that which I have to delineate in this lecture, namely, the individual gratitude, forming in its aggregate the national gratitude, which should be called forth by literary benefaction.

"As one who, destined from his friends to part,
Regrets his loss, yet hopes again erewhile
To share their converse and enjoy their smile,
And tempers as he may Affliction's dart,—
Thus, loved associates! chiefs of elder art!
Teachers of wisdom! who could once beguile
My tedious hours, and lighten every toil,
I now resign you; nor with fainting heart—
For, pass a few short years, or days, or hours,
And happier seasons may their dawn unfold,
And all your sacred fellowship restore;
When, freed from earth, unlimited its powers,
Mind shall with mind direct communion hold,
And kindred spirits meet to part no more."

In this sonnet there is the genuine expression of that appreciation of literary benefaction which becomes the best form of the love of books, and indicates that they have realised their noblest tendencies in the writer's mind. He does not regard them merely as property—he does not look at them simply as the materials with which he has been erecting the structure of his own literary reputation; but he parts from them with a lingering fondness of long friendship—he parts from them as one who had realised in the works the spirit and attributes of the writers themselves, who had imbibed their tone, who had cultivated their nobleness of feeling, who had entered into their motives of action, who felt that he was one with them—who with an honourable frankness avows this identity of feeling and of prospect, and looks onward from the day when he was merely the disciple of their writings to that when he shall

be the companion of their spirits in the enjoyment of immortality.

Admiration of, and appreciation for, those who have gone beyond their contemporaries in the diffusion of knowledge and of truth, of exalted principles and of pure feeling, is the test of the progress in an individual mind. The highest tribute to the memory of Shakespeare was that which Milton paid in his sonnet, and the most popular encomium upon Milton was the celebrated epigram of Dryden; and thus it is ever: as intellect grows, it learns to appreciate the beauty, and to praise more highly the intellect, which is superior to itself; and those who are the most above the world, most readily discern in others any quality or attainment which is above the world also. The absence of veneration, the lack of recognition—and of a frequent recognition—of something to regard with respect, is not the character of a great mind, but of a little one—it is not the character of an expanded intellect, but of a narrow one—it is a sign, not of the greatness of the individual, but of his incapacity even for the perception of greatness.

The influence of the best works of literature is like actual companionship with those by whom they were produced. Their spirits walk the earth and call on those who are capable of aspiration to enter into their feelings—they are the ministers of Providence for good to each and to all that will prize and accept the boon—and they come to man as the angels did to Christ when he tarried in the wilderness of temptation, or when he sank in agonising conflict with sorrow in Gethsemane—through which his path lay to the place of skulls.

There may be an ignorance that scornfully asks, "What good have books done to man?" The question is in the same spirit as the exclamation, "Why should I do any thing for posterity?—posterity never did any thing for me." And there is the same vulgar blunder in both assumptions. I would say, that the idea of posterity has done every thing for you, and that without it you would have been a perishing infant, or, had you survived that period, a wild, untutored, and comparatively wretched savage. It is the idea of posterity that saved you from abandonment in your infancy—it is that which has surrounded you with the various conveniences of civilised life:

for what but the notion of posterity, and of consulting its comfort and enjoyment, is the great stimulus to exertion with those, the outlay of whose capital, and the direction of whose skill, have increased all the resources of civilised life? what but the idea of posterity has led the legislature to the formation of institutions by which personal safety is guaranteed to future times? what but the notion of posterity, spreading itself through the various motives and exertions of human life, has led to every one being endowed with an intellectual heritage, and called to the contemplation of the greatest works of the greatest men as they are preserved to us in the volumes of their production? Posterity has done and literature has done much, incalculably much, even for the most ignorant and oppressed. It has surrounded them with an atmosphere which they cannot escape, and which ennobles them while they breathe it; and they can no more get beyond the circuit of its influence than the savage can claim to be independent of the elements of nature, of the common air, of the flowing stream, or of the earth which grows the fruits on which he feeds, though he may never have heard the name of their Creator.

In endeavouring to trace something of the extent of the benefaction that is conferred upon individuals by the succession and accumulation of literary and scientific talent, the good outstretches so far, spreads so widely, that one scarcely knows at what point of it to commence. To take those who are in the lower gradations of society, who only earn by the daily sweat of their brow the daily bread that is to support their strength: how often have the abstractions of science been the alleviation of the calamities of their lot! One who endured it, has described the weariness alike of mind and of body which is induced by a life of uninterrupted labour. He describes his feelings as having sometimes sunk into a state of complete torpidity, at other times as having been stimulated to an unnatural irritation; and speaks of having felt himself more than once compelled, as it were, by an irresistible impulse, to depart from the scene of his daily occupation, and go forth like the patriarch, not knowing whither, but merely in a blind fever of apprehension, to escape from that which was felt to be a crushing weight upon his spirit. Now, there is a mode of abstracting the mind from the pressure of both toil and care, and one which the multiplication

of books, and especially the multiplication of the works of abstract science, has frequently afforded. I have known many instances of this. In the list of the eminent mathematicians of this country, how many there are who laid the foundation of their knowledge and of their fame amid the unvarying labours of daily toil! Some of the most interesting names in our biographies are those of weavers who have studied their Euclid at their looms, and found in the contemplation of the eternal truth of form and number something to alleviate the pressure of daily weariness, to give the mind a place amid the calmness and beauty of a higher state of being. It is said that once, in a furious battle in Italy, an earthquake was wholly unperceived by the excited combatants. That which could be accomplished amid the fury of conflict has been realised in the abstractions of science: Archimedes was insensible to the storming of Syracuse; his calculations continued until the blow came that terminated his studies and his life.

But literature not only furnishes the means of abstraction from the common realities of life—it also supplies intense realities. It makes us familiar with a living world, a world of thought and of exertion, that else were as remote as the truths of geometry from the conceptions of ordinary minds. It is by it that we know the people of past times, or of distant countries—that they are brought home to us, and the very "body of the age, its form and pressure," exhibited—though it may be an age which has long passed away, or belonged to a country with which our manners, customs, government, and religion have scarcely any thing in common. The actors of those periods move again before us in the glittering armour which they wore, in the peculiar robes or garbs distinguishing the gradations of savage or civilised life in all its innumerable diversities; we are made to realise their inward thoughts and feelings: motives are deciphered, the workings of the mind are displayed, in history and biography, and yet more in fiction, which allows freer scope for realising the truth. Every one may thus learn how to know himself, how to investigate the workings of his own mind, how, as it were, to metempsychose his own with other minds, and, by entering into their feelings when most different from his own, to aspire towards the exercise of that toleration which contemplates with compla-

cency the diversities of human nature, or, I should rather say, that immortal justice which commands man not to judge narrowly his brother-man. The inventions of fancy become to the mind a source of enjoyment when the external world bears heavily and hardly upon it. The gloom, the murky void of the sick-chamber, is peopled with bright and fair illusions—phantoms of grandeur are called up in the mind—and, under the guidance of poetic inspiration, man has a glimpse of new worlds and states of being; while to the simplest and humblest objects of his present condition a language is imparted that acts upon his feelings, that gives him joy and sympathy to which he is a stranger in the common walks of life, and makes new music in his ear, like the melody of the sea-shells as "they remember their august abodes, and murmur as the ocean murmurs there." Literature also leads man into the highest kind of actual being; it suggests those principles of moral action which endow him with the virtues of social life, and build up the greatness of individual character,—that may perhaps cause him to rank amongst the reformers or martyrs of his age,—that give him his share of coöperation with God and with Christ in the work of blessing humanity,—and thus form him, not only for the duties of time, but for the rewards of eternity.

The world itself may be contemplated by religionists in the same way as we study a volume; and this notion of it has been agreeably amplified by the poet Drummond in one of his sonnets, which he calls "The Book of the World." Not but that even that picture is designed to catch the eye and to delight the fancy: it is the emotion that is to be blamed, and not the intentness even on the simplicity of adornment which the poetic spirit of nature has so liberally traced on the margin of the Creator's volume of the world. But deep into the penetration of that science it should be the aim of the mind to enter: it is the object of religion and of philosophy; and the whole world may be thus metaphorically described as God's book. The sensation with which the Jewish writers contemplate the earlier portions of the Bible may be referred to as analogous with the feelings of gratitude that the great authors of literary wisdom should ever claim. For when we read those glowing expressions in the Psalms, and in the writings of some of the apostles,

of the law of the Lord and of the word of God, it was not for the sacred writings merely as the vehicle of religious and moral duty—it was for them as the literature of their country—that they poured forth so much enthusiastic praise. It was the effect of mind on mind; it was the strong expression of the elevation of their souls by the brightness of other souls, thus exalted by the inspiration of God—and genius always is the inspiration of God—that they poured forth in these animated and glowing delineations.

Books are the continued companionship of their authors. By these they live and move, and they offer themselves as companions even of the lowest. How great is the craving of some after society—society that is elevated in station—society on which the world's gaze is fixed! Any one, almost the poorest, may have society such as the courts of sovereigns would vainly strive to parallel. In the humble cottage, the philosopher attends with his maxims of the world; the discoverer comes with the results of his investigation; the censor with his sarcasms—no longer wounding; the poet in his singing robes,—all these "serve, though they only stand and wait:" nor need any one complain of not having a cheerful companion, while the garrulous old Gascon, Montaigne, is still in the world; nor that he lacks a mentor, while the *Essays* of the princely intellect of Bacon can be had for a shilling or for sixpence in almost every shop; nor that he is very curious to see the *Wandering Jew*, while the *Ahasuerus* of Shelley is yet unwounded by the censor's shears; nor, if he thirsts after higher controversies, need he be at fault,—for the dungeon of Elliot—the purest political martyr of our country—is open to him, and there may he hold high converse on the Monarchy of Man.

The spirits of the wise, the just, the good, are ever around us; they tend us with their ministerings by day and by night—they come at the faintest call; and if they do not depart when bidden or dismissed, it is because the truths they have taught us sink into the soul, become incapable of dismission thence, and elevate our nature in spite of whatever is grovelling in it—elevate it into the actual realisation of the grandest truths, which they have thus made a part of our moral being.

I have spoken of books in the diversity of their influences.

The religionist will often trace to them the highest blessing which he has achieved—a sense of the truth of the promise on which he relies for every thing in futurity. Books have often sown the seeds of spiritual life. The *Pilgrim* of Bunyan has warned many a one to start from the City of Destruction—has strengthened him in his conflict with Apollyon—has lighted him through the dark Valley of the Shadow of Death, and guided his feet to the Delectable Mountains. Milton has for many regained a Paradise; and the *Holy Living and Holy Dying* of Jeremy Taylor have become the lives and deaths of those who, but for the liveliness of his delineations, would have been unconscious of the one, and had no hope or glad expectancy of the other. And if these remarks seem to imply access to a greater number of books than it may always be the lot of individuals to possess, it cannot be too strongly pointed out, that it is not in the number—it is not in the quantity—but in the quality of literature, that its power and worth are best felt. Some of those whose genius has raised them from the lowest walks of life, and given their names to immortality, had no greater library than the child's arithmetic might count upon its fingers; and perhaps there is rather a dissipating than a useful effect in the almost unbounded facility of access to works of every different sort that may now, without any very extraordinary advantages, be obtained. For the ascertaining of mere matters of fact, or of history, or of statistics, it is, indeed, very useful that there should be amplitude of means; but this is not the way in which the best power of the intellect, communicated by writing, is exercised over a mind. As I have just said, there have been men of genius who had no such advantages; but with their one or two volumes, they had a treasure in the contemplation of which they were never satiated: the books they had—especially if they happened to be books of the highest worth—became literally their bosom-companions; they pored over their contents by the road-side, and in the solitary grove, or in the crowded street; they pondered them while daylight held out, and as long as their flickering tapers would enlighten them through the night. They consulted them at all times, and felt their power; and the genealogy of genius is traceable often from one composition to another of a subsequent age: we can see it as the mantle

of Elijah falling on the shoulders of Elisha; and while the one ascends in a chariot of fire to heaven, the other, in his strength, goes forth on his mission of enlightening the earth.

If the benefits to which I have alluded be real—if such authors as those whom I have just mentioned should be discriminated from the mere mechanics of literature—if such as I have now described be the obligation of individual minds to the great names of our literature—then strength is given to the argument urged in the foregoing lecture, and there is every inducement to contribute towards such national expression by the agency of the law. And it is with this view that I have discussed the subject at all—not merely on account of the benefit for authors that may be achieved by such a measure as Sergeant Talfourd's Copyright Bill; I am not preaching a charity sermon for great writers—I should as soon think of preaching a charity sermon for the angels of God; but on our own accounts, to show what the state of our feelings should be—to point out the qualities to which it is dignifying to man that his veneration should be rendered—and to mark the nature, extent, and worth of that bounty which God bestows on us by the agency of one mind acting upon other minds. On this account any legislative measure, any social measure, which accords with the recognition of those to whom all, even the most ignorant, owe so much, should be sympathised with and cherished by individuals; and, therefore, any argument of this lecture, as connected with the past, I leave to have its weight on that conclusion—only observing now that the writers of a nation are the measure, the exponent, of its worth as a community.

Of nations that have ceased to be, what is the existing testimonial? What is it that makes us more highly appreciate one than another? Why do we feel emotions at the name of Greece, that Rome, with all its more extensive sway, fails to command? Why, but that, in the literature of the one, human intellect had risen into a higher sphere, wrought with more freedom and boldness, delineated human emotions with a more unerring pencil, and left a stamp of more exalted intellect. Imperial Rome—Rome, with all its dignity—Rome, with its empire over subject nations throughout the extent of the then-known civilised world—Rome was in mind but a beggarly borrower from the little

city of Athens, whose free civic institutions made its philosophers and poets the benefactors of the world through all coming ages. And thus are modern countries properly estimated. The depth of the German spirit, the grace and versatility of that of France, the songs of Scotland, and the well-proportioned and more matured intellect of our own country—these are what explain the claims of the several nations upon the regard and gratitude of humanity—these are what they will more and better live by in future ages, than by the constitution of their governments, their armies, or their fleets.

The writers of a nation are the best guardians of its freedom. With a low, hireling, and servile literature, no forms or institutions, however democratic, can make or insure a nation's liberty. Despotic power has always shown itself conscious of what the press could achieve—of what the might of literature was—by its endeavours after its corruption; and despotic power has too often prevailed, to the debasement of the human mind. But still there is something in intellect which rises above that debasement, which will not allow a total depravity of its nature, but cherishes some germ of truth; and, in the multiplicity of intellectual exertion, there will always be enough of integrity and of truth to protect the cause of a nation's rights—to show the path, not only of external, of civil and political, but, what is infinitely more precious, of inward and mental freedom—freedom of intelligence and of thought—and thus to secure the world against retrograding into the oppression of barbarian power.

The writers of a nation are the heralds of its progress. The discoveries of the profoundest philosophers in one generation become the materials of the child's school-book in the next. The poetic thoughts and delineations of one age become real, practical emotions and impulses toward action in the next, and the Utopias of one age delineate the laws and institutions of another that is to follow; their authors are the pioneers of improvement, starting forth as they do beyond the common policy of the great mass of their contemporaries: too often they have been its martyrs also, and have contributed, by their own sufferings, to illustrate and confirm the lesson which they taught as to the happiness of others.

The writers of a nation are the true expounders of its religion. In them, whatever reality there is in the religion of a country is embodied, and there is it the most unexceptionably presented. It is not in legislatively authorised forms of faith—it is not in creeds, and churches, and books for prayer, where conventional phrases are continued from generation to generation after all meaning has evaporated—that we can trace the real religion of a country, but in its literature; there are its doctrines written—there inscribed its precepts—whether it be the worship of Mammon, of Moloch, or of God. As the Jews of old worshiped the Deity under the appellation of the God of their Fathers, so may we—inheriting as we do the riches of the literature of England—best worship God as the God of our intellectual parents, the fathers of our country's mind,—those who in long succession have delineated the individual spirit, and the social arrangements and tendencies, by which England—to adopt the glorious expression of Milton—may best sustain her ancient prerogative of "teaching the nations how to live."

THE DESTINY OF HUMANITY.

No. I.

March 24th, 1839.

The destiny of humanity to suffer—the destiny of humanity to triumph—these are the two subjects of which I gave notice for the lectures of this morning and of Sunday next. I shall, however, blend both subjects in each of the lectures —it is scarcely possible to treat them separately. God hath joined them ; we cannot put them asunder. They are blended in the world, where the same elements inflict pain and realise enjoyment; they are blended in ourselves, in the workings of our own minds, in the feelings of our own bosoms, in the events of our own lives, in the influences which combine for the formation of our own characters ;— good and evil alternate there, and continually the one is in the other : they are so inextricably intertwined, that we must treat them together, in order to arrive at any thing like a useful view of the subjects themselves, or of the practical application of their discussion to our own circumstances and conduct. Yet the gloomier portion of this subject must needs predominate in the lecture of this morning, as the brighter naturally assigns itself to the following lecture : and this not only harmonises with the best mode of considering the topics in themselves, but also with the associations of Christian history which belong to them.

In delivering some remarks lately on the superstitious observance of the season called Lent, while I animadverted upon the pharisaical ostentation, upon the obtrusiveness, of prayer and fasting, upon the introduction of a mere conventional formality in place of the realisation of that which was pretended,—when I pointed out the total want of connection between observances of this sort and the spirit of Christianity, and of all genuine systems of morality,—I would by no

means be understood as desiring to cut the chain which unites together the recurrence of particular times with the memory of past events. It is fitting that such associations should be cherished. They are not superstitious—they are only the following out of a natural course of action upon the mind, and one to which it may continually and usefully be subject. We regard, therefore, in the arrangement of these two lectures, the intimation which time gives us, the celebration of the events of gospel history, which are brought home to us by chronological associations with greater vividness and force than they can be at other periods.

The week which commences to-day is generally called Passion-week, and I confess that in the very phrase there is something of sacredness to my mind. It is the use of an antique word, not commonly now employed in such an application, but which yet by its etymological meaning and by the generality of its application carries with it the suggestions of a deep philosophy to the mind. Passion is suffering. Such is the truth implied in its application to this week. The passion of Christ is properly the agony of Christ in the garden of Gethsemane—the endurance, spiritual as well as external, which he there experienced; and passion and suffering are continually one—the presence of a power which bears us out of ourselves, beyond ourselves, and which unites the idea of endurance with that of our most extensive, our most permanent, our most energetic, and our grandest achievements.

The life of Christ, that foremost of all biographies for simplicity, pathos, and power, may thus recur to our minds in the revolving year as well as in the pages of the New Testament; and were we to regard it with utter indifference or ignorance as to whether it was founded in external truth or external fiction, it might still be accepted as the mythos of humanity, as the impersonation of our nature, as the exhibition of that nature, with its diversified powers, in circumstances the commonest and the most extraordinary, and as the delineation of the mode in which that nature, even in the best and purest, works its way to yet higher degrees of goodness and of purity, and is made perfect through suffering.

Every portion of the events of the week which is commemorated is fraught with interest; and I know not how I

could better express the feelings with which they should be contemplated, or the lessons to be derived from them, than in the words of Jeremy Taylor, in his great work on the *Life of Christ*. From the remarks which he makes on the events of the last week in the life of Christ, I shall select a few, having the most direct bearing on the subject of our present contemplation, showing in him the destiny to suffering of that humanity which he represented. The passage which I shall first read is from his "Considerations of some Preparatory Accidents before the Entrance of Jesus into his Passion:"

"He that hath observed the story of the life of Jesus, cannot but see it all the way to be strewed with thorns and sharp-pointed stones; and although by the kisses of his feet they became precious and salutary, yet they procured to Him sorrow and disease; it was 'meat and drink to him to do his Father's will,' but it was 'bread of affliction and rivers of tears to drink;' and for these he thirsted like the earth after the cool stream. For so great was his perfection, so exact the conformity of his will, so absolute the subordination of his inferior faculties to the infinite love of God which sat regent in the court of his will and understanding, that in this election of accidents he never considered the taste, but the goodness, never distinguished sweet from bitter; but duty and piety always prepared his table. And therefore, now knowing that his time, determined by the Father, was nigh, he hastened up to Jerusalem: 'He went before' his disciples, saith St. Mark, 'and they followed him trembling and amazed;' and yet before that, even when his brethren observed he had a design of publication of himself, he suffered them to go before him, and 'went up as it were in secret.' For so we are invited to martyrdom and suffering in a Christian cause by so great an example: the holy Jesus is gone before us; and it were a holy contention to strive whose zeal were forwardest in the designs of humiliation and self-denial; but it were also well if, in doing ourselves secular advantage and promoting our worldly interest, we should follow him, who was ever more distant from receiving honours than from receiving a painful death. Those affections which dwell in sadness, and are married to grief, and lie at the foot of the cross, and trace the sad steps of Jesus, have the

wisdom of recollection, the tempers of sobriety, and are the best imitations of Jesus, and securities against the levity of a dispersed and a vain spirit. This was intimated by many of the disciples of Jesus in the days of the Spirit, and when they had 'tasted of the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come:' for then we find many ambitious of martyrdom, and that have laid stratagems and designs by unusual deaths to get a crown. The soul of St. Lawrence was so scorched with ardent desires of dying for his Lord, that he accounted the coals of his gridiron but as a julep, or the aspersion of cold water to refresh his soul: they were chill as the Alpine snows in respect of the heats of his diviner flames. And if these lesser stars shine so brightly and burn so warmly, what heat of love may we suppose to have been in the Sun of Righteousness? If they went fast toward the crown of martyrdom, yet we know that the holy Jesus went before them all; no wonder that he 'cometh forth as a bridegroom from his chamber, and rejoiceth as a giant to run his course.'

"When the disciples had overtaken Jesus, he begins to them a sad homily upon the old text of suffering, which he had well nigh for a year preached upon; but because it was an unpleasing lesson, so contradictory to those interests upon the hopes of which they had entertained themselves and spent all their desires, they could by no means understand it; for an understanding, prepossessed with a fancy, or an unhandsome principle, construes all other notions to the sense of the first; and whatsoever contradicts it, we think it an objection, and that we are bound to answer it. But now that it concerned Christ to speak so plainly, that his disciples, by what was to happen within five or six days, might not be scandalised, or believe it happened to Jesus without his knowledge and voluntary entertainment, he tells them of his sufferings to be accomplished in this journey to Jerusalem. And here the disciples showed themselves to be but men, full of passion and indiscreet affection; and the bold Galilean, St. Peter, took the boldness to dehort his Master from so great an infelicity; and met with a reprehension so great, that neither the Scribes, nor the Pharisees, nor Herod himself, ever met with its parallel: Jesus called him Satan; meaning that no greater contradiction can be offered to the designs of God and his holy Son than to

dissuade us from suffering. And if we understood how great are the advantages of a suffering condition, we should think all our daggers gilt, and our pavements strewed with roses, and our halters silken, and the rack an instrument of pleasure; and be most impatient of those temptations which seduce us into ease, and divorce us from the cross, as being opposite to our greatest hopes and most perfect desires. But still this humour of St. Peter's imperfection abides amongst us: he that breaks off the yoke of obedience, and unties the bands of discipline, and preaches a cheap religion, and presents heaven in the midst of flowers, and strews carpets softer than the Asian luxury in the way, and sets the songs of Sion to the tunes of Persian and lighter airs, and offers great liberty of living, and bondage under affection and sins, and reconciles eternity with the present enjoyment, he shall have his school filled with disciples; but he that preaches the cross, and the severities of Christianity, and the strictnesses of a holy life, shall have the lot of his blessed Lord; he shall be thought ill of, and deserted."

In this mode, and with all the richness of application, the writer whom I am quoting pursues the subject through all the events of that last week. I shall pass on to a brief passage in which he adverts to what is peculiarly and emphatically called the passion of Christ in the garden of Gethsemane:

"When he entered the Garden, he left his disciples at the entrance of it, calling with him only Peter, James, and John; he 'withdrew himself from the rest about a stone's cast,' and 'began to be exceeding heavy.' He was not sad till he had called them (for his sorrow began when he pleased), which sorrow he also chose to represent to those three who had seen his transfiguration, the earnest of his future glory, that they might see of how great glory for our sakes he disrobed himself; and that they also might, by the confronting those contradictory accidents, observe that God uses to dispense his comforts, the irradiations and emissions of his glory, to be preparatives to those sorrows with which our life must be alloyed and seasoned; that none should refuse to partake of the sufferings of Christ, if either they have already felt his comforts, or hope hereafter to wear his crown."

In the remarks with which I shall conclude this quotation, the writer has indulged in that exuberance of imagination which was his characteristic, and which often leads him beyond the literal bounds of recorded events in the New Testament, though in harmony with their spirit:

"The holy Jesus having in a few words poured out torrents of innocent desires, was pleased still to interrupt his prayer, that he might visit his charge, that 'little flock' which was presently after to be 'scattered;' he was careful of them in the midst of his agonies; they in his sufferings were fast asleep. He awakens them, gives them command to 'watch and pray'—that is, to be vigilant in the custody of their senses, and observant of all accidents, and to pray that they may be strengthened against all incursions of enemies and temptations—and then returns to prayer; and so a third time: his devotion still increasing with his sorrow. And when his prayer was full, and his sorrow came to a great measure, after the third, God sent his 'angel to comfort him;' and by that act of grace, then only expressed, hath taught us to continue our devotions so long as our needs last. It may be God will not send a comforter till the third time, that is, after a long expectation, and a patient sufferance, and a lasting hope; in the interim, God supports us with a secret hand, and in his own time will refresh the spirit with the visitations of his angels, with the emissions of comfort from the Spirit, the Comforter. And know this also, that the holy Angel, and the Lord of all angels, stands by every holy person when he prays; and although he draws before his glories the curtain of a cloud, yet in every instant he takes care we shall not perish, and in a just season dissolves the cloud, and makes it to distil in holy dew, and drops sweet as manna, pleasant as nard, and wholesome as the breath of heaven. And such was the consolation which the holy Jesus received by the ministry of the angel, representing to Christ, the Lord of all angels, how necessary it was that he should die for the glory of God; that in his passion his justice, wisdom, goodness, power, and mercy should shine; that unless he died, all the world should perish, but his blood should obtain their pardon; and that it should open the gates of heaven, repair the ruin of angels, establish a holy Church, be productive of innumerable adoptive children to his Father, whom himself should make

heirs of glory; and that his passion should soon pass away, his Father hearing and granting his prayer that 'the cup' should pass speedily, though indeed it should pass through him; that it should be attended and followed with a glorious resurrection, with eternal glory and rest of his humanity, with the exaltation of his name, with a supreme dominion over all the world, and that his Father should make him King of kings and Prince of the catholic Church. These, or whatsoever other comforts the angel ministered, were such considerations which the holy Jesus knew, and the angel knew not but by communication from that God to whose assumed humanity the angel spake; yet he was pleased to receive comfort from his servant, just as God receives glory from his creatures, and as he rejoices in his own works, even because he is good and gracious, and is pleased so to do; and because himself had caused a voluntary sadness to be interposed between the habitual knowledge and the actual consideration of these discourses; and we feel a pleasure when a friendly hand lays upon our wound the plaster which ourselves have made, and applies such instruments and considerations of comfort which we have in notion and an ineffective habit, but cannot reduce them to act, because no man is so apt to be his own comforter; which God hath therefore permitted, that our needs should be the occasion of a mutual charity.

"It was a great season for the angel's coming, because it was a great necessity which was incumbent upon our Lord; for his sadness and his agony was so great, mingled and compounded of sorrow and zeal, fear and desire, innocent nature and perfect grace, that he 'sweat drops' as great as if the 'blood' had started through little undiscerned fontinels, and outrun the streams and rivers of his cross. Euthymius and Theophylact say that the evangelists use this as a tragical expression of the greatest agony and an unusual sweat, it being usual to call the tears of the greatest sorrow *tears of blood.* But, from the beginning of the Church, it hath been more generally apprehended literally, and that some blood mingled with the serous substance issued from his veins in so great abundance that they moistened the ground, and bedecked his garment, which stood like a new firmament studded with stars, portending an approaching storm. Now 'he came from Bozrah with

his garments red and bloody.' And this agony verified concerning the holy Jesus those words of David, 'I am poured out like water, my bones are dispersed, my heart in the midst of my body is like melting wax,' saith Justin Martyr. Venerable Bede saith, that the descending of these drops of blood upon the earth, besides the general purpose, had also a particular relation to the present infirmities of the apostles; that our blessed Lord obtained of his Father, by the merits of those holy drops, mercies and spiritual support for them, and that effusion redeemed them from the present participation of death. And St. Austin meditates, that the body of our Lord all overspread with drops of bloody sweat did prefigure the future state of martyrs, and that his body mystical should be clad in a red garment variegated with the symbols of labour and passion, sweat and blood; by which himself was pleased to purify his Church, and present her to God holy and spotless. What collateral designs and tacit significations might be designed by this mysterious sweat, I know not; certainly it was a sad beginning of a most dolorous passion; and such griefs, which have so violent, permanent, and sudden effects upon the body, which is not of a nature symbolical to interior and immaterial causes, are proclaimed by such marks to be high and violent. We have read of some persons that the grief and fear of one night hath put a cover of snow upon their heads, as if the labours of thirty years had been extracted, and the quintessence drunk off in the passion of that night; but if nature had been capable of a greater or more prodigious impress of passion than a bloody sweat, it must needs have happened in this agony of the holy Jesus, in which he undertook a grief great enough to make up the imperfect contrition of all the saints, and to satisfy for the impenitencies of all the world."

In this beautiful description, we read lessons which it would be profitable indeed to meditate upon again and again, and which, perhaps, may serve to guide us to some knowledge of the true purport of man's creation, and the end for which he inhabits this our world: for sorrow here appears in connection with the most exalted goodness—we see it not as an accident, but as a destiny; and the fact that suffering is a destiny, and not an accident, is a truth which requires the most attentive consideration. I say that suffer-

ing is a destiny, and not an accident. Religious people take but a short-sighted view of things, very often, in their most glowing acts of religion. They render their warmest thanksgivings to the Creator for deliverance from some calamity; but they seem to forget that calamity is a portion of the providential direction, as well as deliverance. It is not merely in extrication from entanglement that we should trace the hand of God. Who brings us into it? by what power are we placed in circumstances from which it is the theme of so loud a hymn of praise to be emancipated? Philosophical reasoners have sometimes stopped short in their dealings with the common argument for the attributes of Deity from the indications of nature. Paley, for instance, tells us that wherever we trace design, it is benevolent design—that the eyes were made to rejoice themselves in the light, and in the perception of external objects, and not for the pain and agony which they sometimes endure, or merely to have their own light extinguished—that the teeth were made to eat with, and not to ache—that every fibre of our frame has capacity for enjoyment, but that suffering is something superinduced, something extraneous. Now, this mode of reasoning might do very well with an imperfect Deity, with a being whose knowledge and power were limited; who was exerting himself to the utmost, but the beneficence of whose view was foiled by the intractable nature of the materials with which he was dealing. But when we speak of the Creator of all things, of the Creator of matter itself, of the pervading Spirit that regulates every movement of every thing that exists, it applies no longer. We must consider this as part of his design, as well as that which commends itself to us as more beneficent. How can we separate them? The earthquake is God's will as much as the harvest: the same elemental powers, which in their combination insure the fertility of the earth, insure also those shocks and convulsions by which cities, with thousands of their inhabitants, are sometimes whelmed in ruin, leaving only the dead morass where once stood the thriving and populous and civilised town. The tempest is as much the will and work of God as the trade-wind, that, blowing on for weeks and months in its unvarying course, contributes so largely to promote the facilities of commerce and the intercommunication of human beings. The confusions that arise from passions,

the desolation which they sometimes spread around, the crimes and sufferings which they realise—these must be a portion of the plan that endowed man with those passions, which are so honoured and praised in the blessedness which they are sometimes the agency of conferring upon the individual and upon others. We cannot isolate the one from the other. The same external machinery, the same elemental powers in matter, the same properties and faculties in mind, the same strong impulses in the human heart and constitution—these work out the most opposite results. He who made them must have foreseen the one as well as the other; and whatever be the bounds by which they may be limited, whatever may be the eventual objects they have to subserve, still all resolve themselves into his constitution of our nature and of the world around us. How can we escape such a conclusion as this—that if there be plan at all in the world, it is universal plan? We cannot assign some things to intelligence, forethought, will, and yet resolve other things, essentially connected with them, into mere accident. If there be a Creator at all, he must be the universal Creator; and it were, indeed, a pitiable escape from any such difficulty as that which we have been contemplating, to doubt the existence of such a Power. We gaze on the sun painted upon a signboard, and recognise there the work of a human hand, and of intelligent skill, however low its degree; and yet to see the sun rising in the heavens, shedding his light abroad, and calling forth richness of colour and exuberance of vitality in all created things,—and to doubt whether here be skill, intelligence, power, and benignity,—the common consent of humanity exclaims loudly against any such poor refuge from the difficulty as this conclusion would be.

If the question is put, Who made the world? God, replies the Christian priest, and the Otaheitan savage; God, replies the proud Mahometan, and the poor and oppressed Hindoo; God, replies the philosopher in his study, as he developes all the wonders of the solar system—and God, replies the peasant-boy, who knows nothing beyond the narrow limits of the information which is communicated to him by his senses. Not only does humanity with one voice agree on this point, but its testimony has been borne under all circumstances, and through all ages. There is the re-

cognition of a God to such an extent that many have regarded it as an instinctive feeling—as an innate idea of humanity; but if it be not this, it is obviously one of the simplest processes of reasoning, in which humanity has exercised its own intelligence. We cannot look abroad in the world, we cannot regard the diversified objects and successive changes presented to us, without tracing intelligent power therein. We cannot exercise our own intelligence upon nature, without feeling that in nature we hold communion with intelligence. How, then, are there two Gods—a God of the living and of the dead—a God of the light and of the darkness? is there Ahriman, the principle of darkness and of evil, conflicting with Ormuzd? is there Eblis warring against Allah? is there Pluto, the sovereign of the world of shades, as well as Jupiter, reigning in Olympus over the ethereal regions? is there Siva the destroyer, as well as Bramah the creator? is there a Satan conflicting against the Deity in heaven, and claiming the dominion of the world, and to be the prince of the power of the air, or invested with such a power as could in one hour spoil the six days' labour of God?

There is no sharp distinction of good and of evil beings—of good and of evil circumstances. There is one power running all through, and one result also; because that which we call good and that which we call evil are indissolubly mingled in operation. Shall we say that the good Creator has put the world under his curse? again we are only flying from one difficulty to another, and a greater. If we take the allegorical account in Genesis as literal—if we say that God made man in one condition, and that his own will has brought him to another which was not the Creator's purpose, we are only warring against all allegorical truth and all literal truth; for in that legend, the Power that planted the tree of life planted also the tree of knowledge,—that which made Eden so rich and fertile, made the world beyond it to bring forth its thorns and briers,—the same Power that formed the first human beings, formed one who was impressible with the delusions of the serpent, and the other so that he was open to her solicitations; nay, that same Power formed the serpent also, and endowed it with the subtlety that made it "more cunning than any beast of the field." We still cannot extricate ourselves from the conclusion, that if through all

this a curse came upon the earth, that curse was a portion of the original purpose: for this was the garden planted; for this, the trees of knowledge and of life placed there; for this, the first human beings formed, and the tempter endowed with the power to lead them astray from the command given them. The curse, too, must have been planned, for blessings to come upon the world through that very curse.

Notions of an imperecft Deity are notions destructive of any conception of the Deity at all. We cannot get above the Author of our natural and moral existence in our own conceptions of good. Whatever be our notions of power, of benevolence, of wisdom, they are all but emanations—they are all but results: we derive the very faculty of conceiving moral ideas from the Power that made us; and therefore in Him they must exist, far above whatever can be imagined in our own minds. Nor do I think that the difficulty of the existence of evil is got over in the most satisfactory way by the doctrine of a future state, even as combined with that of the universal restoration of all intelligence; for there is something hard and arbitrary in the mode of balancing accounts which is thus supposed: it represents the Deity rather according to the contrivances of human laws than according to the best moral conceptions that he has enabled us to form. We see men working out a certain extent of endurance for a certain amount of wages, of heavenly glory, to be arbitrarily bestowed upon them after death. We are obliged to have recourse to the theory of future good, balancing, as it were, past evil, in order to reconcile this notion to our conception of impartial justice. It were, I think, much more satisfactory, it were much better, if we could trace in all this diversified scheme of things the indications of such a truth as this,—that in sorrow, in suffering, in what we call evil, is the best mode of developing the intellectual and moral faculties, the spiritual being, with which we are endowed; and that, in attending to that development, an object so great and good, so intellectually blessed, is accomplished, as to make light or darkness, pleasure or pain, a matter of very inconsiderable amount. If by the sadness of the countenance the heart is made better—if in what we deem the heaviest calamities that man endures, and his bitterest sufferings, he is really putting forth the

germs and blossoms and fruits of his moral existence—if in them he is greater, is of a higher order of being, than he could otherwise have been—then in them he is blessed, regardless of the operations by which they may hereafter change their character, and surround him with the glories of light instead of the accumulating shades of darkness. In this way the destiny of humanity to suffering would be an essential portion of the wise plan of God to produce not merely beings who should eat and drink on the earth from which they must die to-morrow—not merely beings who should realise such a limited amount of good as may suffice in the present state of development of their powers and faculties; but beings who should feel in all how much greater their inherent nature is than all that could minister to that nature—how it partakes of the infinity of Him from whom their spirits are an emanation. The best and wisest men have ever thus considered sorrow as a destiny and not an accident. We trace it through the succession of the Hebrew writers. David, the man of God, pours forth the lamentations that, with at least some semblance of authority, are ascribed to him, in the 90th Psalm, declaring that our years are a burden; that their strength after a limited period is but labour and sorrow; that we pass away like the withering grass, or like the flitting cloud. The patriarch Job, not resolving his own calamities into incidents of the mythological story with which the book begins concerning the interference of Satan, but resolving every thing into the work of his Creator, says that man is born to sorrow as the sparks fly upward—a beautiful indication of that aspiration and ascension of the spirit of sorrow in the human soul, which is commonly taken as merely depressing it to the dust. Solomon, who had tried the reality of all things,—who had penetrated through all surfaces down to the very essence of created being, as far as the powers and resources of a mind like his could reach,—when he said that all was vanity, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity," implied most strongly the clearness of that perception, the greatness of that soul, the reality of that spiritual being, to which all universal and external existence was but vanity. In the language repeatedly employed in reference to the sufferings of Christ, we trace the same notion of the divine will, of ordination, of plan and purpose: thus was he the "Lamb slain from the

foundation of the world." And if we look at the more philosophical nations of antiquity, though their theology was inferior, what but this destiny of humanity to suffer was depicted by the Greek poets, in that irresistible fate to which they represented even their gods as compelled to bow? what but this destiny to suffering did they delineate in the bold and strong colours with which they described Prometheus, his rock and vulture, the Titan suffering for his beneficence to the children of men? nay, what were the doctrines of Epicurus, of the duty of enjoyment, of the cultivation of the means of happiness as a science and art? —what but this destiny to suffering, but the confession that there was an arrangement of things, a destiny in the world, which made it needful for the powers of the human mind to be systematically and diligently applied to the realisation of the greatest amount of present enjoyment? Other writers in succeeding ages—the greatest writers of recent periods—have still held the same tone. *Faust* is similar in its spirit to Prometheus. It shows the tenement of humanity still holding the possessor, like a bird vainly beating its wings against the cage in which it is confined. And the bold strains of the Scottish peasant in his lines, "Man was made to mourn," show us, in the humblest station of life, humanity suffering and struggling with destiny in one form, as the philosophers and poets of antiquity struggled with it in another.

In pursuing this subject, as I shall do next Sunday, I think it will appear that suffering often follows excellence as its result—that, instead of visiting vice as a punishment, it is very often indeed realised by superior goodness; that, attendant on its realisation, there are subsequent victories and triumphs, great changes in the condition of the world, accumulating honour and glory on the head of the individual, ages after he has been unconscious in the earth; that even in those victories and triumphs there is generally a bringing about of a similar destiny in individuals, as the freed men of Christ, though their spirits were emancipated, —nay, in consequence of that very emancipation,—had still to take up their cross when they followed their Master in the path of glory; and that the best solution—the noblest conception we can form of the divine purpose in this state of things—is, attentively to regard the individual

in his suffering, to see how great, how elevated, he often becomes by and through that suffering, and how completely the contemplation of what he is, is absorbed in the consideration of what he may be enduringly. We may thus arrive at the moral, that evil must be encountered; but that the necessity may make us neither resign ourselves to the anticipation of our spirits being vanquished thereby, nor induce us to behold its approach with apprehensive and appalled feelings.

Were the hand of a master artist to delineate Christ in his passion in the garden of Gethsemane, what would be the object that would most intensely fix our gaze, that would most deeply touch our hearts? It would not be the supernatural, though the ministering angel might hover nigh; it would not be the ideal, though the cup of suffering might be there—the chalice which the Saviour was doomed to empty to its very dregs; it would not be the costume or character of the indifferent and slumbering disciples; it would not be the distant glimpse of the remote world, the illuminated halls of Pilate, of Herod, and of Caiaphas, or the armed power thence issuing to seize the Saviour and bring him to his trial; it would not be even the natural adjuncts of the scene,—the quiet brook of Kedron flowing through the garden, amid its shady trees; with the paschal moon looking down at intervals, as the passing clouds let it shine forth upon the events that were transacting upon the earth below. It would be none of these. It would be on the countenance of Christ that the eye would fix, and the heart too; reading there what were the workings of his soul, reading there the grandeur of his moral being—grand not only in that he was the Saviour of the World, but grand in himself, in the strength, purity, loveliness, majesty of his spiritual nature—grand so as to make us forget all else that the hand of the artist, however cunningly, might have exhibited to our bodily senses, and fastening us upon that which to behold, is to admire and love,—which to appreciate, is in some measure to resemble, —and which to be, is to be divine.

THE DESTINY OF HUMANITY.

No. II.

March 31*st*, 1839.

We have seen that the destiny of humanity to suffer cannot be accounted for on any Manichean theory—any conflict of evil powers, of an evil principle, whether embodied or not in an individual being struggling against the good with uncertain and varying success. It cannot be accounted for by such theories as have been advanced under the name of Christian theology, placing this fair universe—on which God pronounced his blessing—under wrath and a curse, and tracing all sorrow to sin; being connected, as much of it is, not only with goodness, but with the highest degrees of attainable excellence: for suffering often follows excellence as its shadow—follows it as an effect follows a cause—and is entailed often more heavily upon men in proportion to the disinterestedness of the objects which they pursue, and to the energy which they employ in realising those purposes. In suffering and in sorrow, the victim is often the most attractive object, the most just and lovely, fixing our attention as the figure of Christ does in the garden of Gethsemane; and while Providence generally brings about the external triumph, causing the endurances of the wise and the good in one age to work out for the great mass of mankind some extensive and lasting blessing in the next, there is still this repetition of what has gone before; the higher the intellect is exalted, and the more it is extended, the more wide is the circle of its sorrows as well as of its joys: they even mark and demonstrate its greatness; and thus the plan of Providence goes on in the world, stimulating a progression in every attainment—thus teaching us that sorrow is not feebly to be shunned, but fairly and frankly to be encountered, and that in its influence upon

us we trace the best sources of present worth and eventual happiness.

In the discourse delivered last Sunday morning, and which had especial reference to the events of the life of Christ, so pathetically and impressively recorded by the evangelists, it would follow as a matter of course that associations of a dark and gloomy kind would preponderate over the opposite, but that these in their turn, in a different phase of the subject, which is brought before us to-day, should shine forth as the ultimate splendour of a process which in its course may involve so much of suffering; for to-day the agonised and crucified one is glorified throughout the civilised world—to-day all Christendom celebrates the resurrection of Christ. Millions of knees are bent in homage to the name of that agonised one—millions of voices praise the crucified one: from the most barbarous regions of the north, to those where political freedom and civilisation have made their greatest attainments, there is, as to this event, a harmony of feeling and of expression. In the boundaries of the Eastern Church, it is made the familiar greeting of the morning: "Christ is risen," says one, and "Christ is risen indeed," is the reply of him to whom it is addressed. The autocrat of the wide-spread regions of the barbarous north, the descendants of the philosophical Greeks, celebrate, according to the rites of their Church, and with all its pomp and forms, the resurrection of Christ;—the Western Church puts on its most gorgeous robes; with all the artistic splendour and variety of its worship, with the swelling strains of its sublimest music, with the pomp of its processions, it dedicates the day to him who triumphed over death and the grave: the cross, once the implement of servile punishment, and confined to slaves in its severe infliction, is now resplendent, as it were, in the heavens, exalted as in the banner of Constantine, when the Galilean prevailed over the power of imperial Rome; it is displayed on standards, it is sculptured on churches in enduring stone. And while pomp and ceremony thus in one direction are made to express a sense of rejoicing, the sterner and straiter sects render their simple homage with congeniality of feeling, and raise with as much fervour their songs of thanksgiving as when their forefathers chanted their hymns upon the

hill-side, as they rallied for their liberties against the forces of persecution. Whatever art, or genius, or intellect could do, has been made to celebrate, in connection with the festivities of the time, the triumphs of him who suffered so ignominiously, and who was agonised so intensely: and the popular legends of old in this country, even catching the oriental spirit which Christianity has disseminated in these western lands, fabled that on the morning of Easter Sunday the sun danced in the heavens,—thus showing how much was inwrought into their minds the spirit of those books which, in the strong language of eastern imagery, called upon the trees of the field to clap their hands, the heavens to rejoice, and the earth to be glad,—nay, the ocean in its fulness to pour forth the anthem of triumph.

But this is not the greatest or best triumph of the agonised or crucified one. There is a higher triumph in the power of that religion which sprang up in Judæa, and which the Galilean peasant first taught to his fellow-peasants and fishermen; there is a triumph which is of a yet higher order: its triumph over laws, institutions, and opinions—the manner in which it has made not only the forms of ancient custom to pass away, in which it has not only eclipsed the universal empires of antiquity, and made them flit like shadows, with their gods and their worship following and fading like a yet fainter shadow—but through all the institutions of different states it has entwined at least a nominal reverence for him who thus endured, and who in the garden of Gethsemane was agonised—it has made all ranks and classes render homage to him, from the most rigid despotisms to the proudest democracies. Judas but once in his life received thirty pieces of silver to get Christ crucified: how many there are who receive twenty times that value every day of their lives to preach Christ crucified! His instructions are incorporated with laws; they are emblazoned in churches; treaties of potentates are made in his name; there is, as it were, a universal bowing down of intellect to him who was then so despised, who was led with such ignominy to be tried before priests and judges, and to be condemned to the death of a slave and of a malefactor. But even this victory over opinion, this fashioning and influencing of the institutions of society, is not his greatest or his best triumph. We find

that whenever any, like him, seeing the destiny of man to sorrow, do not vainly or weakly think to avoid it, but encounter it as that through which man is to be perfected, by which his powers are to be trained and expanded, and by which the best principles of his nature may be stimulated to exercise,—ever teaching man, in his grief, that it is better to feel grief than to stifle the power of feeling altogether,—it is then that Christ best triumphs. Men thus matured, thus grown rich in sorrow, become the source of blessing to others, while they are working out their own salvation. From generation to generation they promote the formation of minds too simple and pure and strong to shrink from a duty for the sake of avoiding a suffering, and who are ready to serve their kind, at whatever temporary expense of agony it may be. In this we read the triumph of Christ, in this we perceive his elevating influence. What great triumph for humanity has ever been achieved or enjoyed, which did not come to us moistened with tears, or even with blood? It has been thus with all the great advances of human civilisation, with whatever is best worth noting in history, from the earliest times. Judaism was the purchase of forty years of the life of Moses in the wilderness—of forty years of endurance of a hard and stiff-necked and rebellious generation, by whom his wisest lessons were rejected as false, and his most righteous laws were resisted as arbitrary impositions—of forty years, which he might have passed in peaceful solitude in Midian, tending the flocks of Jethro, or which he might have spent in plenitude and power in the court of Pharaoh, and at the conclusion of which he did not even enter the promised land, but merely viewed it from across the boundary of the river Jordan, from the top of the mountain on which he was to breathe his last. It was through all this pain, endurance, and exertion, that the great lawgiver of the Hebrews laid the foundation of national good, and established institutions rarely parallelled for their wisdom, and which exert to this day their power. And the apostles, when they went forth with the religion of Christ on their lips, carried their lives in their hands—they considered themselves as devoted to the cause of truth and of humanity—and they shrank not from what it imposed; nay, they went on in their course as those

whose hearts were full and strong; and in all their endurances, in the trials, and eventually the martyrdom, to which their office brought them, they still clung to that office, regarding no tribulation.

The moral wisdom of ancient Greece, penetrating so deeply into the human heart, regarding so extensively the concerns of human life—a wisdom brought down from the clouds to dwell amongst men—the moral wisdom of ancient Greece comes to us overshadowed by the hemlock of Socrates. The intellectual superiority, the philosophy of modern times, combining as it does the grace and lightness and poetical beauty of that of antiquity with the sterner reflectiveness of the north—what is this but the treasure purchased for humanity by the irruption of the northern barbarians, their overrunning and mixing with more civilised nations, and thus inducing a change in the manners and mode of thought of the intellectual world? The Reformation, what is it but a history of persecution—of men of whom the world was not worthy, and whom the world therefore cast out—of men that were hunted through their lives, and whose ashes were not allowed to rest in their graves when they were dead, but, like those of Wickliffe, were torn from their abiding-places, and scattered to the waters or the winds? It was in toil and in peril, it was in the dungeon and at the stake, that they sowed the seeds of that great work which has since sprung up and borne such fruits of truth and liberty.

The power of the poets of our country, their command over the passions, the stimulus they give to the imagination, the rich diversity of their characters, or that energy which they display to us,—and by which, after the lapse of so many years, they yet show themselves more powerful over the heart and soul than inferior minds living in our own times and amid our own associations,—what are these, but the result of their personal trials—of the transition-state of society in which they existed—of the endurances with which they had to struggle—of the sorrows by which they were tried—of the passions which were called forth in their own bosoms—and of all the vicissitudes of their history?

When the chain of royal prerogative was to be snapped in this country, how was it effected? The bullet that put an end to the life of Hampden—the headsman's axe that

descended on the necks of Russell and of Sydney—were the agents for striking asunder the links of that detestable chain, and bidding the country to work out the realisation of political freedom.

If we look at the best popular religious literature, that which is the most widely diffused, that which has the firmest hold upon the common imagination and the common heart, we find that the light of the cottage-window beaming upon Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* is darkened by the shadow of Bedford Gaol; and we are reminded not only of the dungeon in which the writer breathed with difficulty whilst he was penning that wide-spread and enduring work, but of the previous trial of his own soul, the darkness of his own experience, in which he learnt to tell how Christian struggled with Apollyon, and passed through the Valley of the Shadow of Death.

Each great advance in political freedom bears the same character; and the poet rightly tells us that

> "When Transatlantic liberty arose,
> 'Twas not in sunshine and the smile of heaven,
> But reaped in whirlwinds, and begirt with woes;
> Its birth-star was the light of burning plains—
> Its baptism the blood of fratricidal foes."

The slave is emancipated, the condition of the prisoner is ameliorated; and why is this? Because Howard and Clarkson did not shrink from the agonies of their own sympathies, did not endeavour to turn their imaginations away from the horrors which had seized them—the facts which came to their knowledge of the condition of those poor creatures, whether immured in dungeons here, or carried in slave-ships across the ocean. They did not endeavour to divert themselves with common-place engagements—they did not turn aside to the vulgar and every-day concerns of their station; but they indulged the feelings which excited them almost to madness; and in the power of those feelings, they went forth in order to deliver—and they did deliver—the prisoner and the slave. And thus has it ever been since the agony in the garden of Gethsemane and upon the cross of Calvary. Truth may be agonised—truth may be crucified; but eventually humanity triumphs. A truth is put by Milton into the mouth of Satan, when he rebukes his repining comrade:

> "Fallen cherub! to be weak is miserable,
> Doing or suffering."

The lesson is most sound, and of the widest application; we see it in the poetic delineation of the arch-fiend himself. Satan in hell was scarcely more damned than Mammon in heaven—

> "Mammon, the least erected spirit that fell"—

who turned away from the beatific vision to gaze on the riches of the mere pavement of heaven. The delineations of the indomitable will of the leader of the fallen spirits, while they have impressed most minds with an admiration of his greatness,—in many cases, an unwilling admiration,—show us a strength that could not suffer like that of the feebler and grosser spirits.

> "To be weak is miserable,
> Doing or suffering,"—

miserable by its childish endeavour to avoid misery,—miserable by its turning away from sorrow,—miserable in all its forms, when it leads man to compromise the sense of right, to abstain from individual, social, or political duty, for fear it should involve him in dangerous or grievous circumstances—when it makes him look feebly to the future, and build his own hope of goodness and of usefulness upon that, rather than upon what he now is, and what he may now be able to do—when it makes him sell his birthright for a mess of pottage—when it makes him endeavour to quench the power of feeling because he cannot bear the strong agonies of emotion, agonies in which his own greatness would be wrought out—when he goes on playing with his destiny, and endeavouring to keep it at a distance, until at last his death is as poor and paltry as his life was mean and useless, and he departs into another world, not daring to look death in the face, but endeavouring, if possible, to avoid the contemplation of inevitable fate. He who would do any good to himself or others, by cherishing his own powers to their full maturity, or by obtaining for his fellow-creatures some advantages, moral, social, intellectual, or political,—he who would *be* good as well as *do* good, who would fulfil his own destiny in himself, and possess that whereon his con-

templation may rest with complacency and hope,—must be content to bear his burden of sorrow, and must be strong in the conviction that to bear that burden will best exercise the powers of his being—will most cherish them to their proper degree of maturity—will really qualify them for peace hereafter. In a modern and beautiful version of the legends of the ancient mythology of the poets, we are told that the boy Apollo—the great, the immortal boy Apollo—screamed with agony when he became a god.

It is a remarkable circumstance, that the most deeply and darkly toned book of Hebrew literature is the production of its wisest writer. The book of Ecclesiastes stands alone in the compositions that constitute the holy scriptures; it stands alone, as the offspring of the most remarkable mind which the old Hebrew system produced. Solomon lived at a time when the enjoyment of life was accessible to a large extent in favourable circumstances, but when the doctrine of immortality had not made its way in the Hebrew world—when it was scarcely even a philosophical speculation of the wisest. And what is the character of that book? How large are its views, and yet how melancholy! The burden—the ceaseless burden—of the song is, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity." He looks around on nature. With the eye of a philosopher, he regards its diversified forms—he sees the sun rising, and the sun going down again and returning to its place—he sees the rivers flowing into the sea, and yet the sea not filled by their tributary streams, but their waters returning to the place whence they arose, to pursue the same course; and the winds shifting round from point to point, and all in a ceaseless round of cause and effect; and he exclaims, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity." He looks on human life in the midst of its most joyous scenes; he realises palaces and gardens, and the banquet and the song; his imagination seems to revel in the profusion of Eastern luxuriance and grandeur; and yet he winds up this, too, by exclaiming, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity." He turns from this to the severer occupations of man—to the toil and discipline of his mind—to the labour of those who read many books or who make many books—to the direction of study to all the diversities of being, their attributes and properties, their causes and results, from the cedar of Lebanon to the hyssop that

springeth out of the wall; and of these, too, he says, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity." He traces human life during the generations that had preceded him, and as it existed in the then state of society, through all its times —its time to laugh, and its time to mourn—its time to labour, and its time to be idle—its time to live, and its time to die; he adverts to the different relations and circumstances of life—to the rejoicing of the young—to the endearments of social life—to the declining of old age; he looks through the whole course and process of human existence; and he says of these too, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity." And yet, what is the lesson of this exclamation? what are the views it gives us of his mind? He was one who had a much more intense enjoyment of all these things,—of the contemplation of nature—of the revelry of pleasure—of the virtue of learning—and of the course of feeling through human life,—than they have who pronounce them realities. It was the reality of his own intelligence that made them but shadows—it was, that they were absorbed in the consciousness he possessed of his own faculties and powers and tendencies—it was the inward force of the human mind, which led above life, though it could not lead him to immortality; and so he stood on the edge of the abyss, shaking over it the torch which had failed to throw any light on its mysteries; and so he thundered at the portal of futurity, which was not yet open to him,—leaving in his own feelings and thoughts the disproof of his own scepticism, by the extent of his lamentation evincing his greatness, and by his utter silence on the doctrine of immortality disproving the possible mortality of his own mind; teaching by induction and by preparatory disquisition the lesson that should become familiar in after times, that at

> "the birth
> Of mortal man, the sovran Maker said,
> That not in humble nor in brief delight,
> Not in the fading echoes of renown,
> Power's purple robes, nor pleasure's flowery lap,
> The soul should find enjoyment: but from these
> Turning, disdainful, to an equal good,
> Through all the ascent of things enlarge her view,
> Till every bound at length shall disappear,
> And infinite perfection close the scene."

And why is this lesson, to which the wisdom of Solomon

could not pierce, familiar now? How, as a matter of fact, has the world been able to look habitually on man's enduring existence as an ascertained truth? This, again, is the triumph of the agonised and crucified one—this is the victory of Christ: for, whether by what is deemed the supernatural revelation of a doctrine to mortals, or whether by harmony with the dictates of nature and of reason; whether by the fact of an exhibited miracle, or by the reality of our common destiny; whether by historical proof, or by poetical suggestion,—certain it is, that by the teachings of Christ has been spread the conviction of a being beyond this life, of a being that shall never end; the grandest anticipation that the human mind can conceive, the noblest destiny that it can entertain. This is a matter of fact; and, having become so, there is little prospect that by any individual doubts or disputations it will ever be otherwise. The conception of immortality once gained by human nature will not be lightly parted with. It is not in doubts and difficulties, sometimes presented to the mind in seeming strength, and at other times as mere unrealities and shadows, —it is not by these that a hope so widely entertained, so strongly felt, so evidently cherished in the whole process of Nature and of Providence, can ever be obliterated from the world. There is no completeness in human life without such a continuation. The decline that generally takes place in age, does not give evidence of completeness—it does not show us an harmonious scheme filled up in all its parts: there is much to be done in the process which has commenced here, and of which we anticipate the continuance—there is the obvious beginning of a work before us—it is before us as a beginning; and having proceeded thus far, who can fail to reckon upon its completion hereafter? In the civilisation of the human race, we behold a providential scheme carried on through ages; we see mankind led step by step from the low condition of barbarism and of savage life, until they attain all that now distinguishes the most refined and intellectual and powerful nations; and we see a tendency to continue in this, which assures us that, in the course of ages, there shall be realised upon the earth what has been predicted in Utopian speculations. But if there be such a process for man considered as a race, why not for man as an individual, since individual character is the great end, is

the highest end, of this mighty social process, and one which takes precedence of it in its reality and its importance? We cherish, therefore, the anticipation of these attainments—we look for immortality to man. It is in the very dawning of our being that the dew-drops of sorrow fall, or that the cloud of death sheds a momentary darkness: the unextinguished light will pierce that gloom, will spread itself abroad over the whole face of creation, will cast its illuminating influences on all orders and gradations of being, and display to us the earth in all the loveliness of its variety, and heaven in its eternal majesty.

DUTIES OF THE PRESENT TIME, AND OF ALL TIME.

April 7th, 1839.

The subject of this morning's lecture is, the duties of the present time considered as modifications of the duties of all time. Duty is that which is due from a man to his fellow-creatures, to his Maker, and to himself. It is that course of thought and of feeling, of speech and of action, to which he is bound, as it were, by the relations in which he is placed—which is as enduring as those relations—in the exercise of which he resembles the planetary body rolling on in its course, maintaining its proper position with regard to the great central orb around which other planets revolve, to its own satellite or satellites, and to the other bodies that make up the planetary system. It views man in the position in which he is placed with regard to others, and also in that which he occupies in regard to his own future self, that self which he must realise by the power of his imagination, and to which he owes the sacrifice of so much of present good as will the better conduce to the accomplishment of future good. Duty, therefore, implies law, or something which has the recognised force of law, over the individual mind; it supposes reference to a standard which the individual regards as the standard of truth and of excellence; it implies the comparison of himself in his thoughts and actions with that standard, and approval or condemnation according to the degree of his conformity therewith. In its simplest and earliest form, duty is obedience to a command. There is for each occasion that comes within its sphere a specific injunction or prohibition—"Thou shalt do this, thou shalt not do that." As man advances in intelligence, the sphere of duty is enlarged, and it assumes a freer as well as a wider scope: he becomes

himself the judge of that which will conduce to his own happiness, of that which will consist with his own relations; he forms his general rules or principles in reference to this, and imposes upon himself the restraint of not yielding to immediate inducements when they contravene such rules or principles. In the approach of a being towards excellence, this notion of law gradually merges in that of free and spontaneous volition: it becomes less and less of restraint, of self-compulsion, and it becomes more and more of willing and spontaneous exertion, more and more even of unconscious impulse. It has not been under the sense of law, it has not been by the exercise of restraint, that the noblest deeds of righteousness and of beneficence have been performed; they have been the impulse of beings who had risen to such a condition of benevolence, that it would have been harder for them to be selfish or vindictive than to be generous or forgiving.

The nature of Deity has been well described as the one great impulse to that which is best. Hence we never speak of the duties of the Deity. We consider God as a being above duty, as himself the law and standard of duty, to whose nature our notions of moral truth and excellence must be referred; but who is not regarded as himself subject to laws, which the excellence of his own nature entirely supersedes. But were the Deity the being that he is drawn in the sterner modes of Calvinistic theology, one who could give way to vindictiveness, one who could repent of his own doings, one who could impose laws without giving strength for the fulfilment of those laws, one who could have recourse to the paltry and factitious substitution of earthly courts, often misnamed of law and justice,—in such a case we should not recognise the standard of perfection in the nature of the Deity; we might speak of the duties of such a God; nay, we might properly say, that the God of Calvinism did not properly do his duty by the creatures of his own formation.

Duty is universal and everlasting. It belongs to man in all the gradations of his being—it belongs to him in the simplest forms of society, as well as in the most complicated—it is to be found wherever there are two rational beings to stand in any relation towards each other—it exists wherever man contemplates the external world—when

he gazes on the heavens or on the earth, as the objects of science, it unites him with the invisible Spirit that pervades all, admonishes him of his duty to their Creator, makes heaven display to him his Maker's glory, shows him the earth as filled with God's goodness, and calls on him in turn to admire that goodness, to consecrate in his own mind that glory, to feel his own relation to the Infinite and Eternal Being; it exists wherever there is rationality and consciousness, wherever there is the sense of present existence and the hope of future existence, in relation to which man orders his conduct here, that so he may realise by it the greatest amount of good hereafter.

From considerations of this kind arise certain rules and principles of action, which have been recognised as moral duty through most ages and by most nations, which come to us with the prescription of antiquity, which bear on their front the sanction of general consent, which proclaim themselves to us as the duties of all times, and the exercise of which is demanded of us, wherever the sphere of our own existence may be placed. But in the varying circumstances of human life, in the changing forms of human society, there will be continual diversities, in relation to which the exercise of individual judgment must be called forth and conscientiously applied: and our present purpose is to ascertain how some of the simplest and most elementary of human duties are modified by the circumstances of the times and of the country in which we live. And the first of these general duties which I shall mention as so modified, is that of establishing for ourselves a moral principle or guidance to go by in our path of life. In early periods, this was generally supplied by authority. The philosopher, surrounded by his pupils, gave forth his notions of a moral code—showed what, in his estimation, were the great laws of moral being, and how they should be applied in the circumstances of those to whom his instructions were delivered; and in these admonitions his disciples rested: they thought it enough to say afterwards, "The master hath said it;" and they endeavoured, according to their power and condition, to realise in practice the theory which he had inculcated. In other circumstances, this was supplied by the priest: he announced what he described as the oracles of God, or of the gods; he declared their will, he enforced what he represented

as their requirements; and he inculcated the observance of those injunctions, which generally led rather to technicality —ceremony, sacrifices, and prayer—than to strictly moral duties. But the observance of these was the notion of religious duty entertained by that time and age. In the Mosaic institutions, duty was embodied in laws, which were the rule, not only of public and political life, but also of private life and social relations: in these they found the summary of their duty—to these, as declared to them by an authority which they acknowledged as supreme, they offered at once civil allegiance and moral submission.

Mere authority, however, implies no act of reason, but merely the submission of the individual whose moral course is thus cut out. It may be adapted to the simpler states of social being, but it fails when society becomes more complicated in its relations. It is impossible for any laws, directing especially only external actions, to meet the innumerable exigencies that are continually arising. As man advances in intelligence, he endeavours to penetrate into the reason of a law; he takes for his guide that reason on which it is founded, rather than the literal enactments of the law itself: and thus, it is evident, there must be a growth in human nature towards a system implying more of intelligence, more of a distinct purpose in the mind of the individual, and of the adoption of means for the realising of that purpose, than consists with the first rude and simple form of a good moral code, enforced by authority, and requiring external submission. It would be impossible to lay down precisely, by defining external actions, the duty of human beings in the present condition of society. Probably, not a day would elapse before some case would arise that was altogether unprovided for in the code, and where the intelligence of the individual must be its own guidance. In Christian precepts, there is the generality that evidently contemplates this state of things. There is not so much direction to do this or to abstain from that, as there is to love thy neighbour as thyself, to do to others as thou wouldst they should do unto thee, and so on—describing general dispositions, states of mind and feeling, which, as they are realised, must become themselves the guidance to particulars which could not themselves be separately and distinctly enumerated. The first need, therefore, of modern times is, that there

should be gained a knowledge of the elements of moral science—that moral philosophy should be, far more than it is, a popular study—that, comparatively disregarding specific precepts, that can only guide to external works on the mere ground of submission, we should enter into the purposes of our being, the dictates of our own nature, the constituents of our own happiness, and, realising these, form our notion of that rule of action by which we may most certainly attain to their thorough realisation. The importance of this guidance of moral principle, as a means of fairly judging of others, and allowing for the differences that are produced by differences of climate, of manners, of traditionary notions, of forms of government, and so on, is stated by a writer on the requisites of a philosophical traveller—I allude to Miss Martineau's work, *How to Observe:*

"Here, then, is the wise traveller's aim—to be kept in view to the exclusion of prejudice, both philosophical and national. He must not allow himself to be perplexed or disgusted by seeing the great ends of human association pursued by means which he could never have devised, and to the practice of which he could not reconcile himself. He is not to conclude unfavourably about the diet of the multitude, because he sees them swallowing blubber, or scooping out water-melons, instead of regaling themselves with beef and beer. He is not to suppose their social meetings a failure, because they eat with their fingers instead of with silver forks, or touch foreheads instead of making a bow. He is not to conclude against domestic morals, on account of a diversity of methods of entering upon marriage. He might as well judge of the minute transactions of manners all over the world by what he sees in his native village. There, to leave the door open or to shut it bears no relation to morals, and but little to manners; whereas, to shut the door is as cruel an act in a Hindoo hut as to leave it open in a Greenland cabin. In short, he is to prepare himself to bring whatever he may observe to the test of some high and broad principle, and not to that of a low, comparative practice. To test one people by another, is to argue within a very small segment of a circle; and the observer can only pass backwards and forwards, at an equal distance from the point of truth. To test the morals and manners of a nation by a reference to

the essentials of human happiness, is to strike at once to the centre, and to see things as they are. . . . . The universal summary notions of morals may serve a common traveller in his judgments as to whether he would like to live in any foreign country, and as to whether the people there are as agreeable to him as his own nation. For such a one it may be sufficient to bear about the general notions, that lying, thieving, idleness, and licentiousness are bad; and that truth, honesty, industry, and sobriety are good: and, for common purposes, such a one may be trusted to pronounce what is industry, and what idleness; what is licentiousness, and what sobriety. But vague notions, home prepossessions, even on these great points of morals, are not sufficient, in the eyes of an enlightened traveller, to warrant decisions on the moral state of nations who are reared under a wide diversity of circumstances. The true liberality, which alone is worthy to contemplate all the nations of the earth, does not draw a broad line through the midst of human conduct, declaring all that falls on the one side, vice; and all on the other, virtue. Such a liberality knows that actions and habits do not always carry their moral impress visibly to all eyes, and that the character of very many must be determined by a cautious application of a few deep principles. Is the Shaker of New England a good judge of the morals and manners of the Arab of the desert? What sort of a verdict would the shrewdest Gypsy pass upon the monk of La Trappe? What would the Scotch peasant think of the magical practices of Egypt? or a Russian soldier, of a meeting of electors in the United States? The ideas of right and wrong, in the minds of these people, are not of the enlarged kind which would enable them to judge persons in situations the most opposite to their own. The true philosopher, the worthy observer, first contemplates in imagination the area of humanity, and then ascertains what principles of morals are applicable to them all, and judges by these."

Now, although such differences as those which she alludes to do not exist in this country, yet differences which are, as it were, their faint reflection, their shadow, do exist, and do require the application of the same principles of judgment. If here no Ashantee offers a human sacrifice to his god, how many thousands and millions

there are who are ready, in their fervid sense of religion, to offer up religious liberty, and the rights of conscience of others, as a sacrifice to the sectarian dogmas which they themselves seem to make the objects of adoration! If here no parent is left exposed by his children to the overflowing waters of the river, yet how many there are who endeavour to induce them, by the representation of their own interests, to subject themselves to the stifling and mental overflowing of sordid interest! If there be none here whose fanaticism arms them with the dagger, and sends them forth to deal deadly retribution upon those whom they judge the enemies of truth, of righteousness, or of freedom, yet how many there are who, in their zeal, hesitate not to strike at reputation, at character, at interest, at prospects, and to inflict the severest, and it may sometimes be the most fatal, wounds! If there be not those here who ostensibly and avowedly trade in slaves, yet how many there are who hold their fellow-creatures in a species of oppression that is akin to slavery; who do barter away their right to the fair remuneration of their toil—their right to their portion of influence in civil society and in public proceedings; and who thus show the same principle, though it may be in a moderated and mitigated shape. These individuals require not only the allowance of their being mistaken, and of their being actuated by conscientiousness; but they all require the application of principles which show where is the right and where the wrong, and which to any one, for his own guidance at least, may become a director in the path of life.

Where, but in a just conception of the end for which man exists upon the earth, can man find the guidance for such a line of action as may best become him, and make him most happy in its pursuit? Where else can we find it? Not in law; for law, though multiplying itself from session to session, though accumulating its particular enactments, until the record of offences baffles all skill to enumerate or classify them,—violating the dictates of that justice which it professes to realise and bring home for administration throughout the community,—law, in such a country as this, can assuredly be no practical rule of life for the individual. Nor can religion, as religion is commonly taught—religion, restricted to dogmas as its essence—religion, embodied in external forms and expressions of worship

as its language—religion, called into the world, seemingly only, or at least chiefly, in order to enforce some external and ritual observance, some Sabbatarian enactment, clothing itself in a semblance of divine authority to which it has no title; we cannot, in the language which is held by theologians in the discussion of their dogmas, in their sectarian squabbles, and in their confined and technical mode of treating that which should have the broadest universality, find the practical directory for the morality of individual life. Can we look for it in custom—in custom, ever taking that which is for that which ought to be, ever confounding semblance with reality, the external with the internal—in custom, elevating the accidental above the essential, and continually bestowing its highest honours on what is merely fictitious or conventional? Custom never has been, and never can be, the practical moral rule of the wise and good. Shall we search for it in education? The better sort of existing education is enriched by the accuracies of physical science—often deep in the treasures of antiquarian lore—abundant and diversified in the varieties and attractions of external accomplishment: but how rarely, indeed, is it that any approximation towards enlightened moral philosophy forms a portion of the instruction of the young, or brings to them any distinct perception of what morality or duty is, or what they themselves ought to be as the children of a spiritual Creator! The guidance we seek is in none of these. It is to be formed by man for himself, as an act of individual duty; and it is one which the complexity of modern society, and the diversified relations that have been generated by the progress of society, render so important, as to constitute it the primary duty to which he should apply his powers.

Charity towards the poor is a duty which may be called universal and everlasting. There has been from the earliest times the distinction between rich and poor. It began with the first development of the germs of civil society; it has gone on, becoming more complicated in many particulars, and more aggravated. Charity has been enforced, perhaps, as long as any moral duty whatever has been enforced upon the human conscience. We find it provided for by the Hebrew legislator, who told the cultivator of the ground that he was not to be strict in gathering up his corn, but

was to leave his scattered ears for the poor gleaner, and not even to return again to the field for the sheaf that might have been left there. We find charity, in the form of almsgiving, largely practised by Christians at a subsequent period; and it was the distinguishing virtue of the middle ages. Institutions have risen up for almost every form of human privation and suffering; regarding all the accidents to which humanity is liable, and doing something towards the relief and safety of the poor, when they are subjected to disease. But still I apprehend that these universal demonstrations of the universal principle of charity do not meet the exigencies, or satisfy the peculiarities, of the present time; for the feeling of charity towards the poor should take a shape as peculiar as the evil with which it has to struggle. And what are the peculiar forms of poverty? The state of poverty is more largely extended than it has usually been. The multitudes, the masses, are more mighty, more huge, as it were, than those who in many times and countries have been thus marked out from the body of society. There is more intelligence amongstthe poor, and knowledge has outrun, in its growth, the growth of the external conveniences of human life; so that a mental struggle is produced, a conflict between the spirit of man and the condition in which man is placed. Connected with this, there has been an unusual, if not an unprecedented, degree of impatience with the privations to which such multitudes are subjected, and a feeling of antagonism towards other classes of society.

Now, in all this we see reasons for cultivating a different feeling from that of the mere giver of alms to the beggar —we see the need of something much beyond, much wider and deeper than, the good which can be realised by the mere founding of hospitals and dispensaries. To grapple with the evil, to meet the way in which poverty puts forth its present state of suffering, there must be appliances that will raise an entire class, that will form society upon a better principle, that will carry the great advantages of society far deeper and far more widely than they have yet been extended. This must be done, in a great measure, through their own instrumentality; and, therefore, the best external demonstration of charity towards the poor, is to promote that which raises them above charity—the best help is that which enables them to help themselves, according to the

dictates of their own feelings, and the due consideration of their interests. The charity of all charities for the poor, in the present state of society, is education—education, which in youth may so deeply implant in them, that it cannot afterwards be eradicated, a sense of moral truth, goodness, and worth—education, which will make them thoughtful beings, looking before and after, considering the coming winter, while they are surrounded with the blessings and bestowments of summer—education, which will give them the means of relaxation, of enjoyment, and of excitement, of a purer kind than the grossness to which they are so frequently driven by the weariness of their occupation, and the languid state to which it reduces both their bodies and their minds—education, which will teach them to respect the rights of others, which will show them where their own claims come into collision with the not unreasonable demands of different classes, which will dispose them to a state of accommodation and friendship, rather than of hostility and of antagonism, and will lead them to venerate themselves, and their own works and occupations, as having a place, and a most important one, in the great and harmonious arrangements of political society. This is charity to the poor. Charity, did I say? It is justice; not merely justice to the poor, but justice to human nature—justice, that, wherever it perceives the mind and body bearing the stamp of the Creator's image, wishes that, unchecked by real privation, and not swamped or lost in ignorance, they may grow up to their proper maturity, and show us a succession of beings formed to replenish the earth, and rule over it—justice to the attributes of our nature, that they should have a fair chance of complete and rich development; that they should realise upon this earth the good for which they were designed by their Creator, and enable us to perceive—not here and there only, in a rich and rare specimen, but in each—

> "the elements
> So mixed in him, that Nature might stand up
> And say to all the world, *This was a man.*"

If this be only charity, it is merely by charity that the offspring of the noblest and wealthiest is preserved from destruction in the cradle—if this be only charity, what is there on the earth that can be called justice, or re-

garded as the indefeasible claim of man upon his fellow-man? Charity to the poor, in our times, is the duty of justice to human nature—the duty of rendering to each one the means, not merely of physical subsistence, but of mental and moral growth, leading to the realisation of the image of the Creator.

Sincerity, truthfulness,—these represent a universal duty—the duty of the earliest and most barbarian times—the duty of the latest, of the most complicated, of the most civilised, or of the most corrupt times—the duty of all times. It was in the realisation of this principle of duty that the patriarch went forth from his native land, not knowing whither he went, but only knowing that he was, in his pilgrimage, bearing his testimony to the one great principle of truth. It was this which perilled the life of the Grecian philosopher—of him who brought down philosophy from the clouds to dwell amongst men—to which he bore his testimony, and to which he pledged his draught of hemlock. It was this which brought Christ to the agonies of the garden of Gethsemane, to the indignities of the hall of trial,—where he declared that for this purpose came he into the world, that he might bear witness to the truth,—and which afterwards conducted him to the scene of his mortal sufferings on Calvary. Truth is the principle of martyrs and reformers at all times; but it is especially the great principle of those who live in an age of conventionalism and fiction—who live in a period when falsehood and equivocation have spread so widely over the whole extent of society, when they have enthroned themselves in religion and law; when men are required to sign solemn professions of belief which they have never studied—when they carry on their efforts for obtaining justice, whether civil or criminal, by means of one fiction piled upon another, until the form of justice itself is dimly perceived, if it be perceived at all, through the mist in which it is involved; and when the commercial spirit eradicates conscience from trade, as political corruption endeavours to eradicate it from civil life, spreading around us the pestilential atmosphere of conventionalism and falsehood. At such a time, simplicity of language, unconventionalism of speech, a continuous and living protest by the faithfulness and frankness of our own dealings, is that modification of

a general, of a universal duty which our times require of us; and the effect of the fulfilment of such a duty is wisely described by a writer who, more than any one in his own day, pursued a long life of authorship as the apostle of sincerity—I mean the author of *Political Justice*. In his *Last Thoughts on Man*, Godwin thus writes of reserve and frankness:

"We do not communicate all that we feel and all that we think; for this would be impertinent. We owe a certain deference and consideration to our fellow-men; we owe it, in reality, to ourselves. We do not communicate indiscriminately all that passes within us. The time would fail us; and 'the world would not contain the books that might be written.' We do not speak merely for the sake of speaking; otherwise the communication of man with his fellow would be but one eternal babble. Speech is to be employed for some useful purpose; nor ought we to give utterance to any thing that shall not promise to be in some way productive of benefit or amusement. Frankness has its limits, beyond which it would cease to be either advantageous or virtuous. We are not to tell every thing; but we are not to conceal any thing that it would be useful or becoming in us to utter. Our first duty regarding the faculty of speech is, not to keep back what it would be beneficial to our neighbour to know. But this is a negative sincerity only. If we would acquire a character for frankness, we must be careful that our conversation is such as to excite in him the idea that we are open, ingenuous, and fearless. We must appear forward to speak all that will give him pleasure, and contribute to maintain in him an agreeable state of being. It must be obvious that we are not artificial and on our guard. After all, it is difficult to lay down rules on this subject: the spring of whatever is desirable respecting it must be in the temper of the man with whom others have intercourse. He must be benevolent, sympathetic, and affectionate. His heart must overflow with good will; and he must be anxious to relieve every little pain, and to contribute to the enjoyment and complacent feelings of those with whom he is permanently or accidentally connected. 'Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.' There are two considerations by which we ought to be directed in the exercise of the

faculty of speech. The first is, that we should tell our neighbour all that it would be useful to him to know. We must have no sinister or by ends. 'No man liveth to himself.' We are all of us members of the great congregation of mankind. The same blood should circulate through every limb and every muscle. Our pulse should beat time to each other; and we should have one common sensorium, vibrating throughout upon every material accident that occurs, and when any object is at stake essentially affecting the welfare of our fellow-beings. We should forget ourselves, in the interest that we feel for the happiness of others; and if this were universal, each man would be a gainer, inasmuch as he lost himself, and was cared and watched for by many. In all these respects we must have no reserve. We should only consider what it is that would be beneficial to have declared. We must not look back to ourselves, and consult the dictates of a narrow and self-interested prudence. The whole essence of communication is adulterated if, instead of attending to the direct effects of what suggests itself to our tongue, we are to consider how, by a circuitous route, it may react upon our own pleasures and advantage. Nor only are we bound to communicate to our neighbour all that it will be useful to him to know. We have many neighbours besides those to whom we immediately address ourselves. To these, our absent fellow-beings, we owe a thousand duties. We are bound to defend those whom we hear aspersed, and who are spoken unworthily of by the persons whom we incidentally encounter. We should be the forward and spontaneous advocates of merit in every shape and in every individual in whom we know it to exist. What a character would that man make for himself, of whom it was notorious, that he consecrated his faculty of speech to the refuting unjust imputations, against whomsoever they were directed; to the contradicting all false and malicious reports; and to the bringing forth obscure and unrecognised worth from the shades in which it lay hid! What a world should we live in, if all men were thus prompt and fearless to do justice to all the worth they knew or apprehended to exist! Justice, simple justice, if it extended no further than barely to the faculty of speech, would, in no long time, put down all misrepresentation and calumny, bring all

that is good and meritorious into honour, and, so to speak, set every man in his true and rightful position. But whoever would attempt this, must do it in all honour, without parade, and with no ever and anon looking back upon his achievement, and saying, ' See to how much credit I am entitled!'—as if he laid more stress upon himself, the doer of this justice, than upon justice in its intrinsic nature and claims."

In religion, the conventionalism to which I have adverted largely obtains, and it calls for a correspondent course on the part of him who would faithfully discharge the duties of the present time. How much there is in the words that are continually repeated—the confession of miserable sinners, the acknowledgments of entire depravity, that are made to the Deity—how much there is that nobody believes—that nobody would have taken literally by his neighbours as true of his own character! how much there is said as a set form of words, passing like counters, of which the intrinsic worth is very different from the assumed worth! I see not why the man who has any sense of religion should conform to conventionalism. On the other hand, I see the strongest obligation on him that he should resist it; and by resistance, in his own better example, show what religion is, and how it ought to be cultivated by his neighbours. A deep sense of truth should be the first characteristic of religion, giving to the whole language and life the sanctity which is popularly supposed only to attach to the solemnity of an oath. Nor is it merely in conventionalism that religion requires, by its present state, by its existing defects and corruptions, the exercise of virtues that may be regarded as duties arising out of these circumstances; but in its technicalities also. What is religion, as commonly represented? A set of dogmas, expressed in particular words, and linked together into a creed—a set of precepts arbitrarily selected—or a set of observances, whose whole worth is in their technical peculiarity, and not in the influence they can exercise either on the mind or on the body of the observer. This technicality is carried into the very language of religion, and its votaries speak a language which is not the language of the literature of our country. Religion—a feeling growing out of the world around us, out of the history of mankind in the times that are passed, out of

the condition of the human race now, and its prospect of futurity—is something simple, extensive, universal, something that belongs to the common language and forms of speech, and that should familiarly associate itself with common feelings. And so the sectarianism of our times requires the duty of being non-sectarian in feeling and conduct. It requires the same testimony to that general sense of human brotherhood, that absorption of distinction, that throwing down of barriers, in the sense that God hath made all of one blood, which was so prominent in the first forms of religion.

The Jews had but three sects in their religion. We have three hundred, at the very least. There is no speculation too remote not to become the badge of a sect—there is no ceremony too worthless not to become the badge of a sect—there is no interest too low or worldly not to become the occasion of sectarian separation; until religion seems rather to have come on the earth as the parent of division, than as the source of unity. Now, a consciousness of what we owe to truth itself, to the spirit of religion, to the wants of our times, to our own characters, and to the fraternity of man, should lead us to the profession of those general results, to the restoration of that simple and comprehensive spirit in religion, in which all sectarianism will merge, in which those different distinctions would be estimated according to their worth; and far above all would be the fact, that we have all of us one common heart, and that that heart should render worship to our God and love to our brethren.

Simple and elemental are the first principles of the operations of nature, the powers of which,—whatever may be their vastness and their majesty when we contemplate them in themselves,—in their innumerable combinations, work out the phenomena of the changing seasons, present us, from month to month, with the different products of the earth's fertility, with its fruits and its flowers,—varying even the appearances of the clouds in sunshine every day and every hour. Equally simple, equally vast and majestic, are the primeval elements of moral being; and those, too, like the elements of nature, work out from year to year, and from day to day, in countless combination, thus to supply the changing phenomena of the relations of human

life; and as the first, with all their grandeur, and with all the variety and loveliness of their productions, give us from day to day our daily bread, so do the second, in their diversified application of utility, strengthen us from day to day for the discharge of our daily duties.

PROPER USE OF THE BIBLE IN SCHOOLS.

April 14*th*, 1839.

There has been of late, in the public mind, some glimmering perception of the duty, and some practical groping after the accomplishment, of national education. After long ages of insensibility or slumber, there has been a growing recognition of that which belongs to the kindly duties of society, —taking charge that its youthful members do not grow up altogether ignorant of their rights or of their obligations—that they are not abandoned wholly to chance, or that they are not left to training which is worse than chance, because, in the influences of what is called chance, the powers of nature mingle with the powers of society—that they are not abandoned to a training that, I say, is worse than this; because it tends to fashion them upon false models, and send them into the world with perverted faculties. But it is only an indistinct perception, a faint and feeble groping, that we can yet trace in reference to the great subject. It is often discussed, and yet it is seldom mentioned without some very plain indication of how very imperfectly it is understood, and on what erroneous grounds it is often decided. There are those who attempt, as the great object of education, to secure the distinction of the several classes of society; who seem to think that, whatever is done, class distinction must be provided for—that the rich and the poor, whom God hath made of one blood, to meet together in the feebleness of birth and in the unconsciousness of the grave, should not meet together in the reception of knowledge, in the exercise of their dawning reason, and in the acquisition of the faculties and powers that are to form their characters and unite them with society. Others are equally earnest that the distinction of religious sects and denominations

should be preserved in education. Religion, with them, instead of a uniting principle, is a dividing one; instead of making their first lesson, "Little children, love one another," their first lesson is, "Little children, be jealous and fearful about one another's religions." They are, above all things, desirous that the lines of demarcation which are drawn through society, dividing, often on the most frivolous grounds, this theological party from that theological party, should be impressed, in the first instance, in the school-room—that the school should be mapped out like the world, and present an epitome of the world's jealousies, the world's prejudices, the world's bigotries, and the world's persecutions. Some are desirous—although this has been falsely charged upon many to whom it is attributed—to exclude religion altogether from education, to keep it as a sort of private property, to refer it to parents or sectarian teachers, and to give knowledge without religion; as if the knowledge of God's works and ways, and the comprehensive descriptions of all science, of all truth, of all history, which are the objects of education, could be given, or should be given, without any perception of Him whose spirit links them all together, who is in them and through them and pervades them, and without reference to whom they can never be rightly understood or appreciated. While others there are who seem to put a ban upon all science, who would exclude every thing but what they call religion —which generally is only the shadow of religion; and in the discussions of the legislature, we have found the representative of that university which claims to be the depository of the deepest learning in Europe, and of the purest religion, declaring that all knowledge is unmixed evil —that is to say, that an acquaintance with the works of Beneficence is evil, that tracing the laws by which infinite Wisdom directs its operations is evil, and, by implication, pushed to its consequences, that nature and the Deity are evil. There are those whose solicitude seems to be lest too much of instruction should be given, who are for setting the most rigid limitation, lest the acquisition of knowledge should make the mind feel itself above the humble occupations to which a large proportion of society is of necessity devoted: as if the soul of man, in all the richness that it can attain, and in all the grandeur to which it is capable of

rising, might not as well unite itself with the very lowliest occupation to which humanity can be honourably called, as well as with the highest; as if both the highest and the lowest, so long as there is common utility in their object, were not alike worthy of connection with those faculties which expatiate through the regions of science, of truth, and of poetry, and which claim an affinity with God, who made the world and who pervades the world. There is, too, mixing itself with all this, a sort of insurrectionary spirit against the enforcement of education; as if to give knowledge were to invade the right of individuals to persist in ignorance, and to train their own offspring in ignorance; as if any civic privilege, any political right, could be vindicated by declaring that souls shall not rise into the proper exercise of their essential attributes and being as human souls; as if there could be any privilege or any civic dignity to preserve by asserting the empire of darkness, and by claiming to wither and to blast what might be some of the noblest specimens of human life.

In this chaos of thought and purpose,—in this wild conflict of ranks, of sects, and of parties,—this indiscriminate warfare, where the peculiar objects of each seem to agree only in this one thing, that they thwart the great purpose,—it is not, perhaps, to be desired that any set of men at present possessing the power should attempt to realise such a system of universal social instruction as is the "consummation devoutly to be wished." What we should rather desire, perhaps, is to wait until by continuous reference to the topic, until by its being viewed on every side, and discussed in all its influences and bearings, there should be something like a more general perception of what education is, of what constitutes the right of every human being born in a civilised and Christian community to partake of its advantages, and of how that right can be most efficiently established in practice: and it is a contribution towards this great work, it is an advance of this noble purpose, to keep the subject before us, and from time to time to advert to such portions of it as may be most in discussion, or seem most to require elucidation. And one of the points that has of late most occupied attention is, What should be the use of the Bible in schools for general instruction? and on this subject there are four opinions.

The first is, to leave out religion altogether—to consign it, not to the general instructors of such schools, but to the parents, or to religious ministers chosen by the parents. The second is that which has been adopted in the governmental plan of education in Ireland—to use the Bible in extracts, in lessons so carefully selected and arranged as that they may interfere as little as possible with sectarian differences. The third is the scheme embodied by an eloquent and eminent advocate of public education in the bill produced last session—namely, that of having the Bible read through entirely, without comment, in every school. And the fourth is that for which a cry has been set up—a strange and unmeaning cry, except for the purposes for which it was raised—of "the Bible, the whole Bible, and nothing but the Bible"—meaning, in the mouths of those by whom it is employed, that with the Bible there shall be associated the Catechism and the Prayer-Book, in order to fix, as far as it can fix, the meaning and tendency of the use which is to be made of the volume itself. Of all these, I think the plan which has, to a certain extent, been established in Ireland, to be the least objectionable, although that, too, has its defects: but in that, and in that alone, is there no sectarian distinction—in that, and in that alone, are such portions of the Bible as cannot be intelligible or interesting to the young withdrawn from their notice—in that, and in that alone, is there a reasonable and impartial attempt to identify religion with their instruction, at the same time holding in as much respect as possible the peculiarities of the parents whose children are subject to this training. Even this, however, as I said, is liable to exceptions; and very much indeed must depend upon the mode in which it is executed. It is obviously undesirable and improper that the Bible in any schools whatever should be used merely as a school-book—that it should be employed for the common and merely mechanical purposes of instructing children in the formation of words and the construction of language. We cannot imagine a greater degradation and perversion than this. It is a useful work, but it is one which may be accomplished with almost any materials—one which does not require at all to be elevated by the outpouring of intellect, and to which that can impart no illumination. It is a work in which we should feel it a

degradation and an abuse to employ the writings of many of the men whose names have glorified our country's literature. It is a portion of that system by which a premature familiarity with the works of genius has so often marred their effect—has dulled the perception of their beauty and their grandeur throughout life—has inflicted, as it were, a cureless wound upon intellect, in reference to what might have been its food, its strength, and its best enjoyments. Not to any purpose of this kind may the scriptures ever be reduced. It is also an abuse of the scriptures in schools, when they are made the means, by textual citations, of impressing theological dogmas upon the minds of children. It is, indeed, an abuse of the scriptures when they are used in this way by adults. It is not by the quotation of particular sentences—it is not by the sound of words—it is not by the array of texts, or notes on their connection—that any one can ever arrive at the real meaning of the writers, that we can gain a perception of divine truth, that we can gain any accurate or just perception of the mind of the writer of these words: and if such a system be inapplicable to reasoning adults, much more must it be so to the instruction of children.

Dogma need never be taught to children; it never should be taught to children. There is a great deal too much of it, even with the most learned of mankind. But, in early life, what has the mind to do with abstract and general propositions on a matter so abstruse as theology must ever be? It is by particulars children learn in all other things, and by particulars should they learn in religion also; the feeling, when once excited, becoming its own teacher, doing its own work of accumulating and of generalising as soon as generalisation can be desirable; in fact, the object should be rather to retard than to advance the disposition to generalise on the topics of theology. Let the child learn religion as it learns nature and science; let it observe one fact after another; let this exhibition of goodness and that display of wisdom be gently pointed out—or let it be led by observation itself. It will then sink into the heart, generate the appreciation of wisdom, stimulate the love of goodness, and will realise more religion than all the creeds that ever were committed to memory, or parroted with the utmost fluency and verbal accuracy. To begin

with teaching creeds is prematurely to infuse a partisan disposition into the child; it is to excite prejudices, perhaps antipathies, bigotries, and false judgments of others that may last through life. The Unitarian child is taught to read the creed of its parents, and the declaration, "There is one God"—to identify the distinguishing dogma of a sect with the words of scripture: it supposes the one must needs be taken as perfectly identical with the other; it looks on those who affirm a mysterious union of three persons in one Godhead as flatly contravening and denying the express words of scripture; it thinks of them and appreciates their minds and their feelings accordingly; it is through life, while this influence is over it, made a sectarian, a partisan, and to a certain extent a bigot. I take for this illustration a tenet that most of us, if not all of us, admit, as being the least exceptionable mode of exhibiting this evil influence. One whose mind has been thus acted upon in early life, can scarcely understand the degree of rationality, of profound understanding, of clear reasoning, of sincere devotion, of affinity of spirit with the scriptures, which there may yet be in many who see nothing in this form of words that is at all inconsistent with the notion they entertain of mysterious plurality in the Deity. The evil of this embodying of dogmas in texts, and fixing them in the child's mind, is, that in after life much which passes for knowledge is really only verbiage: there is the semblance of knowledge far beyond its real sphere; and where this is the case, narrow and prejudiced characters are likely to be generated. We have throughout society the most inordinate deference to mere forms of words, even under circumstances where those forms of words cannot, by the utmost stretch of liberal judgment, be taken as conveying any real indication of the mental perception of the being by whom they are employed. Quite recently, in a trial for stealing at the Old Bailey, a child of six years was produced, who had a knowledge of some of the most important and decisive facts of the case. The child was questioned about what would happen in the event of false evidence being tendered, and stated with great ingenuousness—what was probably her notion of reward and punishment—that a naughty girl would be sent to prison. But the child was asked where her soul would go after death; and because

she simply confessed that she did not know, her evidence was refused, and the trial had to proceed with a groping towards the eliciting of truth and the completion of the purposes of justice. Now, is it any thing extraordinary that a child six years old should not know where the soul goes after dissolution? Why, how many adults know any thing of what may happen then? How many of the greatest and wisest men that ever lived have freely and frankly confessed that they could not tell any thing about it! A child of six years old not know! Why, Jeremy Bentham, the greatest jurist of our age—the man who saw the furthest into the objects of law, and into the nature and construction of law and legal proceedings in order to accomplish their purposes—did not know, and therefore would he have been an incompetent witness in a court of justice on a simple question of fact. Socrates, the wisest philosopher of Greece, spoke dubiously of the matter; he reasoned on the one side and on the other; and, after a life of the profoundest and most practical wisdom ever passed, he confessed himself in a state of uncertainty. Nay, King Solomon of Judæa, whom children in such circumstances are, from generation to generation, taught to regard as the wisest man who ever lived in this world—why, he, at the time he wrote his Ecclesiastes, was evidently by no means certain as to this matter; and he, too, might have confessed, and probably would have confessed, that he did not know where the soul went after death. How absurd, then, is it to offer a premium on the use of words; to place a child in what it might deem an honourable or a disgraceful position, just according to its repeating mere sounds, that cannot by any possibility represent real knowledge in its mind! Can we suppose that those who have received even the best education the country can provide —those who are not left, like the child of six years old, to such knowledge as charity may bestow upon it, or as may flow in upon it in the chance-work of society—but those who enjoy the best training and the wisest instruction, those who gather all that can be imparted in our universities—are influenced by the belief that those who tell falsehoods will go to future punishment? If so, how happens it that seldom does Parliament meet, or a court of law hold its sittings,—that seldom is there a gather-

ing of merchants upon 'Change,—nay, that seldom are the doors of churches opened, and services gone through,—but falsehood is uttered, ascertained falsehood, and men go through it with a simplicity and a regularity which indicates that they cannot possibly know that the class of liars will go to hell? Justice for children ought at least to be rendered by courts of justice. Where truth and matter of fact is all in all, there should be no attempt to hold up a conventional form of words, and make that the ground of credence or honour in the one case, and in the other the ground of censure and condemnation. Let all speak that which they think; and to give this encouragement should be the object of every institution and political action. Falsehood and equivocation are the fruits of the system of dogmatical teaching in schools for the young; whether dogma be directly enforced from the mouth, or whether—which is yet worse—it be incidentally conveyed in the forms of scripture phraseology.

Another abuse of the Bible in education is that which continually appeals to its preceptive authority; and this introduces a moral confusion which, in the great majority of instances, is not likely to be got rid of through the whole course of life. I see no reasonable objection to—nay, I should advocate—a frequent use of moral sentences from the scriptures, put up in large letters, placarded in conspicuous characters, which even an infant may define—such sentences as, "Thou shalt not steal," "Do unto others as ye would that they should do unto you;" but let them be thus elevated, let them sink through the senses into the heart, not simply as texts, not as extracts or quotations from the Bible, not as resting upon some theory of preceptive authority. Present them to the mind as the works of nature are presented—present them in their independent power and truth—let them be as shining as the sun in the heavens by day, or as the moon by night. It is in their own moral verity—it is in accordance with the unsophisticated dictates of the human heart—it is in their self-sufficing and independent power—that they enforce their own proper obligations. In them the mind of even a child may recognise, not the precept of this or that particular teacher, not a verse taken from such a chapter or such a book, but moral truth, power, and obligation,—and they may thus

become a conscious portion of its own nature and moral being. But put them on the ground of preceptive authority —that authority which extends to such a multifarious collection of admonitions or dehortations of different kinds— and what is the result? That they become subject to all the various accidents and confusions that belong to preceptive authority. That authority may be found connected with many precepts which have no such claims as those which I have specified, with others which might have been added, to the character of self-evident or eternal moral truth. For instance, the most common application of this precept of authority is not only to such declarations, such precepts, as I have quoted, but primarily to the whole of the Ten Commandments. Now, take the first table of these commandments—the first four of them: why, they are full of the peculiarity of Judaism—they are full of the spirit of a particular time, of a particular country and race, and of circumstances to which there is nothing analogous now existing in the world. "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." Such is the first injunction enforced by preceptive authority on the child; and what does the child know or understand about it? or what response of moral approval, such as there is in other cases, can there possibly be in the child's intellect and heart? Who is the Deity to a child? It knows him not. If any conception of the Deity has found its way to that infant intelligence, it is probably some notion of a good but gigantic man dwelling in the clouds, or above the clouds; and thus it is violating the commandment, if it is to be interpreted strictly and literally, at the time when its teachers are most proud of its perception, and most disposed to praise it for obedience. So with the stern anathema upon the formation of graven images. What has the child to do with this? What can it make of it? It may, perhaps, if it live among very zealous sectarian Protestants, be taught to give it a turn in its own mind against its Catholic neighbours; it may have its soul early embittered and corrupted by looking on them as persons who break God's word, and, in defiance of his injunction, make graven and molten images, before which they fall down and worship. But little good will have been conveyed by preceptive authority in the formation of moral principle. The effect of this precept among the Jews was to crush

all art amongst them. When they became a civilised people —when they participated in the admiration which other nations felt for such work—they interpreted the prohibition more laxly, and this in proportion as they held more tenaciously the doctrine of divine unity and spirituality.

But what have we to do with these historical matters—with this temporary prohibition—with these admonitions which have scarcely any application in our own time? If they tend to excite bigoted feelings against Roman Catholics, and if they tend to excite aversion or indifference to works of art, they tend to degrade humanity, and they debar it from one of the purest and highest gratifications. The taking of the name of the Lord in vain, I suppose, is now exclusively understood in reference to profane swearing—a vice which did not exist among the Jews, and which could not have been the offence against which the command was levelled; so that, in this particular case, the reference to preceptive authority has no application, but is a misapplication of its original purpose. Then comes the Sabbatarian command; and here preceptive authority seems to have little other result than to lay a trap for conscience. The prohibition, as it stands in the commandment, is one the strict observance of which is in our time impracticable. Those who attempt it cannot do it without inconsistency with their own standard. The consciousness of sin is needlessly forced upon their souls, and with it self-degradation, and all the moral debasement that follows that consciousness. And to accommodate it in any way to modern times, the world has to be taught that the seventh day means the first day; and that the sanction supposed to arise from God's having created the world and rested from his work on that day is to be transferred to the resurrection of Christ. The child is to be initiated at the very outset of life, and in the infancy of his reason, into this theological juggling, this contemptible quibbling, this word-mongering, by which the profession of theology has been continually disgraced, and which has separated its use of language and its employment of argument from that use and that employment in all other departments of human life.

"Take no thought for the morrow; for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself: sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." Here is a precept which, if the

Bible is used—as it often is used in schools—with regard to its preceptive authority in morals, agrees marvellously ill with one great object of education, and that is to teach prudence, to compel the exercise of thought for the morrow; not to let children think that "sufficient for the day is the evil thereof," but to realise the evil of future days, and put forth energy of mind and exertion of body in order to the avoidance of that evil. To teach practical duties, a directly opposite prohibition and injunction must be given; there must be a war between precepts of equal authority created in its intellect, or else the one brought into harmony with the other by the same juggling of words that I have just been denouncing. And how much is this topic of preceptive authority capable of abuse, and to what an extent is it actually abused! I remember, about seven years ago, when the great conflict was going on in the country for the carrying of the Reform Bill, that the streets were very liberally placarded with the scripture text of, "Fear God, and honour the king; and meddle not with them that are given to change;" that is to say, in the sense which those who placarded the town meant it to be understood, and in the sense in which the text was actually understood by thousands and tens of thousands, "Have nothing to do with those who are seeking for an amendment of institutions—mix not your desires or efforts with theirs—do not support the Reform Bill—do not vote for Hume in Middlesex." This was the real tendency of this use of the scripture precept, which, in the literal meaning of the words, might be taken to bear such construction. What is the true meaning, is another question. It is truly undesirable in the teacher that his mind should be unstable—that it should be given to the taking up of a proposition one day, and its renunciation the next—that he should be incapable of seeing where there is a decided balance of evidence, and laying hold of and abiding by that which has been once grasped by his understanding. Instability of mind in a friend is an undesirable thing, destructive of that which is the soul of friendship. But whether to such cases as this, or to any thing analogous to the instance to which it was then applied, the maxim might originally refer, is a question not of easy solution. It is a question requiring extended and philosophical analysis—it is a

question which involves much knowledge of human nature, comparison of circumstances, knowledge of the spirit of the society in which it was originally written, and power to compare that society with the one in which we ourselves exist; and assuredly no child is capable of instituting such investigation, making such analysis, or arriving at a satisfactory conclusion. We may take it as an implied condemnation of all this sort of appeal to preceptive authority, that, in the figurative description of the temptation of Christ in the wilderness, the attempts of Satan to divert him from the great purposes of his mission came in the form of scripture precept: "Command these stones that they be made bread;" "He shall give his angels charge concerning thee, and they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone," and so on;—while the mind of Christ, by a beautiful and lucid moral instinct, discriminates at once between maxims applicable to his own purpose and condition, and those which were inappropriate, and so pursues its way through the trial. The mode in which that trial is recorded may serve as an impressive warning against the blind following of preceptive authority.

The use of the entire Bible that has been so loudly called for, and which has been represented as so essential in schools, is, I apprehend, another abuse—an obvious impropriety; for how many portions of the Bible there are that cannot be interesting, that cannot be intelligible, to a juvenile intellect! Merely to read the Bible through, according to the proposition in Lord Brougham's bill of last year—to read the Bible through in every school—can only habituate the ear to the reception of words with which the mind connects no ideas; and to do this is assuredly not one of the purposes of education; to do this is neither just as to the development of intellect, nor as to the Bible itself—which must thus become associated with the most wearisome sensations. To read it accompanied with theological comment is still worse, and liable to all the objections which I have just been making to dogmatic and preceptive employment. The best plan is to let the use of the Bible for the child be generally spontaneous. Let it have the means of gratifying its own curiosity, should that curiosity be excited—let it have the opportunity of following its own inclination; nay, let there be attraction

and stimuli in the form of those pictorial illustrations which so often convey meaning where words fail to the young, and associate meaning, when it is apprehended, with images of beauty and of grandeur. It may be that the child will not, in the first instance, resort to those portions of the Bible which the theologian may most value—it may be that its first desire will be to read the strange and marvellous adventures of the heroes of the old Hebrew time—the wonderful feats of Samson, the strong; and the wild roving and dwelling in caves of David, the outlaw; but from its interest in these it may pass to other and higher interests, and, from feeling the charm of external adventure in the narratives of one class, it may come to have an interest in moral adventure in the character of another class, and perceive something of the beauty and energy of Paul and his fellow-apostles going forth, bearing their lives in their hands, conquering in the strength of patience and of submission, and subduing the world by simple truthfulness and humility.

The best use is the use which a judicious teacher, knowing the particular structure of the minds of his different pupils, would make of the Bible. He is the best selector. Looking not merely at the seed, but at the soil in which it is to be scattered—turning over the pages of his Bible, not merely to see what he thinks most simple and most interesting, but calling to mind all the indications of character that he has noted in the children, and combining these so as to perceive what is best adapted to them—he would be in a condition to inspire them with a love of the Bible, to excite in them a desire of acquaintance with the Bible, and to lead them onwards in their knowledge of it, and their reception of its influences, to the highest point they are capable of attaining whilst their minds are under his directing care. He would, probably, first make them acquainted with some of its simplest stories, and he would very often find it good not to do this in the exact words of scripture, because there is so early and so strong an association formed of conventionalism and of solemnity, in the repetition of whatever words are found printed within those covers, as to blunt to the child's perception the meaning, the force, the liveliness, of the narrative. How often, for instance, is even the history of

Joseph read by the child in its dull, monotonous tone, —the way in which it has been taught to combine letters and syllables and words together,—without any realisation whatever in its imagination of what those words express, or of the adventures—so peculiarly adapted to lay hold of its fancy—which in them are enshrined? I once heard a story told at a sort of festival assemblage of the children of two or three sects. They had been the objects at this meeting of two or three different religious exhortations, enforcing on them the duty of prayer and self-examination, and telling them to be sure and be good and pious and devout, and so on; which was received by them with the usual aspect of conventional solemnity, and made the sort of impression usually conveyed in such cases. But then the story—not as an extract from the Bible—the story of Joseph, in words adapted as carefully and judiciously as possible to their own language, brought home by some slight modification and accommodation of the story to their own apprehension—was repeated to them; and then what animation there was! their faces kindled up with brightness, and at different points of the tale, when they saw the little hero thus made known to them braving the terrors of the dungeon, and escaping from his false brethren, they burst out in joyous acclamations of applause; it seemed at once to fill their minds and sparkle in their eyes, and sometimes to burst forth in tears, while it animated their little hands; and I have no doubt that the story sunk into their hearts, and bore better fruit than many of the religious teachings about which churches and sects make so loud a contention. Not but that I think—although other and more familiar vehicles may be employed at an early period —that it should be the object of the teacher and the legitimate use of the Bible to familiarise them with its language, with its selection and its collocation of words; for where so well as in the Bible do we find that fine old English language, of which our country may justly be proud, associating itself, as it naturally does, with whatever is most strenuous in intellect, with whatever is most clear, simple, straightforward, and noble in morals? The very language of the Bible—translated as it was at the purest era in the history of our language—the very language of the Bible may almost in itself be venerated as moral prin-

ciple or power, of which use should be made in education, and which cannot fail to bear good fruit.

From stories like that of Joseph, such a teacher as I am mentioning would lead his pupils on to those whose moral effect is most deep and touching, and where even an infantile intellect may see the truth beneath its graceful veil of allegory, as in many of the parables of Christ. Further instruction may raise their minds to an appreciation of the moral exhortations with which the apostles were accustomed to conclude their epistles—it may guide them to some perception of the lyric poetry of the Hebrew Psalmist; and if the training of children be extended until they grow to that age when the depths of philosophy may be sounded, and when the loftiest flights of poetry may be appreciated—then may the high-toned declarations of the prophets, then may the deep meaning of the author of Ecclesiastes, then may the remote and profound lessons of the mythos of the creation and of the fall, and of similar compositions, —then may these be brought before them, and they may gaze upon those wonders of the inner temple, that rending aside of the veil, which is the highest point that man can gain in his study of the Hebrew scriptures; while in and through all, from the lowest to the highest point, the character of Christ—at once so simple and yet so profound, at once so obvious and yet so capable of the most intense research—may infuse its own light and lustre, expanding as the mind expands by which it is contemplated.

Where, it may be asked, are such teachers to be found? and I reply, Only as they are prepared for the purpose, can they possibly be found; and such an operation is the best step that can be made towards a general system of social instruction: for it is most essential, if ever we are to have a plan of national education realised, that it should be conducted by an unexceptionable agency—that the best minds, the best hearts, that the country can produce, should be called to the work, and should be sustained in the work; it is essential that the office of such teachers should be held in honour, that it should not be regarded as a poor and low appointment —that it should not be treated as something which may be delegated, as a measure introduced to the legislature twenty years ago proposed to delegate it, to the fraternity of parish clerks: as if any man was competent to the training of the

human soul because he had sense enough to say "Amen." It should not be left to dependence on caprice or sordidness, or the class-interests of parents; it should be raised above the sinister influences that pervert almost every intellectual operation, when once they become bound up by worldly concerns, desires, and apprehensions; it should not be abandoned to mere voluntary support, but it should be discharged with the spirit and munificence that belong to a nation's duty. And when thus teachers are formed and supported, we may have some hope that, freed from the interference of priests—whether established or non-established—raised above the prejudices which make so many desirous of limiting education in proportion to the humbleness of the class in society to which it is to be imparted,—such men may hold on their course, may infuse into the breasts of the young of modern Europe the spirit of the old bards of Judæa and of the philosophers of Greece, may raise them to the moral grandeur of the great men of our own country, and thus lead onwards towards the regeneration of society.

THE TRUTH OF SCRIPTURE.

April 21st, 1839.

The truth of scripture is a phrase very common in men's mouths, and, as they apprehend the belief of the truth of scripture, very clear and common in their minds: but, like most phrases that have obtained general currency, it is liable to exceeding abuse, and is, in many instances, most grossly perverted. They will tell us that they are filled with zeal for the truth of scripture, who violate some of the plainest and most universally obligatory truths of scripture —who, instead of loving one another, are filled with hatreds, envies, and jealousies of one another—who, instead of seeking that comprehensive unity which so remarkably characterised those who lived in the days when the Christian scriptures were put forth, are ever setting up standards of devotion; marshalling men against one another for hostile purposes, and the promotion of hostile interests, under the banners of sectarianism: nay, we live in a world of people who profess the strongest veneration for the Bible, but who have no sympathy with the characters that are most illustrious in its pages—who have no affinity of mind with the patriarchs, prophets, and apostles—who would think them, were they again to appear, as they were thought in their own day, pestilent fellows turning the world upside down—and would be very apt to treat them in the same way as they were treated by their persecuting contemporaries.

What is the truth of scripture, that makes scripture so valuable and glorious? Judging, not by the writings of theologians, not by the productions of voluminous commentators,—but taking the volume as it stands in itself, and endeavouring to arrive at the source and essence of its power,—I apprehend that the truth of scripture most pro-

perly designates its moral truth, and that many of the controversies and discussions that have filled the world with their noise, and that have been deemed combats for and against the truth of scripture, have really had little, if any thing at all, to do with the subject. For instance, I do not apprehend that any importance can be attached to what may be called the canonical truth of scripture. The holy scripture, we are told, consists of certain books, and of no others. The number and titles of those books are fixed by the Articles of the Church of England, and the list has been commonly received of late times, although at an early period it was hotly disputed, both as to the works which are omitted, and the works which are inserted. The canonical truth of scripture is that which consists in all its books having been written by the authors to whom they are ascribed—having been written by them under the divine direction and superintendence; and being the only works so written, they are, therefore, to be received as man's rule of faith and worship. And yet, some of these works did not obtain admission into the canon for one, two, or nearly three hundred years. Others, it is the opinion of learned men of the present day,—as the epistle of St. Barnabas, for instance,—have an equal right to admission there with the many that are generally received. And, after all, how can the subject ever be brought home to the common mind? how can it be judged of by those who are devoid of the greatest advantages of learning, seeing that those who possess such advantages are divided among themselves? What can the great mass of what is called the Christian community know of the authenticity of works written in Greek or Hebrew, at a period varying from seventeen or eighteen hundred years ago to several thousand years ago? How many have read Lardner's *Credibility of Gospel History*, where external testimonies to the authenticity of the different books of the New Testament are so liberally accumulated? Of those who have read it, how many have ever verified Lardner's citations, or so examined the works to which he refers as to be sure that those citations make for the purpose of his argument, and really establish the proposition which he announces? What is the history of the discussion in this country, with all its attainments, with all its knowledge, and with all the splendid apparatus of its universities, and the endowments of its

Church? What is the opinion, and how is it formed, in this country, as to the canonical truth of scripture? Why, Lardner rests upon the authority of the Fathers; Paley abridges the collections of Lardner; the clergy read Paley, and the people depend upon the clergy: and so is the canonical truth of scripture established; and so are the books vested with or deprived of an authority that is to make them paramount over all the dictates of reason or of conscience. What can be more preposterous than this? Moral truth comes home to man's moral nature—moral truth appeals to the common principles and feelings of humanity. But here we have doctrines dependent upon the result of the most curious, learned, and abstract discussions —upon the authenticity of particular passages in particular manuscripts—upon tracing the history of works through a long period, finding those works enveloped and entangled in corruptions of all sorts; and when the evidence is gained, perhaps, it might be worth little in the estimation of any one who had the opportunity of judging of the character of the witness. What can be more absurd, for instance, than, as was shown lately, that the doctrine of praying for the souls of the dead should depend on one of the books of Maccabees, or on the question whether a particular passage in that book were itself genuine, or, if genuine, were rightly translated? What can be more absurd than that the tenet of justification by works, as opposed to justification by faith, should depend upon whether a certain epistle was written by James the apostle, or by some other James? From such a point, a mighty mind like that of Luther was led to reject that epistle from the canon, and to establish his own doctrine of dogmatic truth, in defiance of what the world claimed as canonical truth. It cannot be that religion—religion coming from God, and intended for humanity at large—should ever be contingent upon antiquarian dissertation, and upon the history and authenticity of ancient manuscripts.

Truth in the sense of scientific truth, or historic truth, has as little to do with what, in my apprehension, is called the truth of scripture, when we use that phrase as expressive of the moral power and glory of the Bible; for there can be little doubt that the scriptures represent the state of natural philosophy, and the appearance of the facts which

form the subject of each record, as they seemed to the writers of each successive age in which a book of scripture was produced. Not all the theological acuteness in the world can reconcile the account of the creation, in the first chapter of the book of Genesis, with the truths of natural philosophy—not all the acumen displayed in distorting texts, or in distorting facts, can reconcile the account of the flood with the geological phenomena which present themselves to the student of science. The incongruity was first felt in reference to the solar system. Astronomy first came into collision with the notion of this species of truth in the scriptures; and the result was a relentless persecution, that kept down the progress of astronomy for a while, and that consigned one of its most illustrious discoverers to the long and dark endurance of the dungeon. The history of Galileo is well known; and even in our own times a similar outcry has been raised against certain students or professors of geological science, because they have altered the chronology of the world's material being; and, instead of a few thousand years, have traced it back by indubitable marks, by nature's own record on her own materials, through a long series of ages.

The strict historic truth of every portion of scripture would imply the reality of witchcraft—of witchcraft, once so hunted out in this country, and exposed to such severe punishment; but which, at last, the administrators of the law have ceased to regard as a possible crime.

Besides, what is all history? The mind of the historian enters as deeply into it as do the events which the historian undertakes to narrate. If we take the best and most valuable histories which have been produced in our own language, they are not more discriminated from one another by their relating to the affairs of Europe, or to those of Spain and Germany—by their relating to Rome in its decline and fall—by their relating to the progress of events in our own country—or by their placing before us the events that have been transacted in the distant regions of India,—they are not, I say, more discriminated from one another in those objective varieties, than they are discriminated from one another by the different mental qualities of Robertson and Gibbon, of Hume and Prescott. History is not only the narrative of certain outward events that have been

transacted in any age and country; but every history is necessarily the exhibition of the construction of the mind, imagination, and character of him from whose pen it falls. What wonder, therefore, that in the ancient Hebrew records —in the records of a people in a state of deep ignorance, and emerging out of barbarism—we should find a continual bias towards the marvellous,—that we should find many transactions elevated into prodigies, and many wonders described as miracles, which can now be satisfactorily accounted for by the operation of natural causes? What wonder that some of the historical books of the Old Testament should be marked by a leaning against, and others in favour of, that priesthood by which their country was governed; so as to leave it an object of rational inquiry and doubtful conclusion at this time whether, for instance, their celebrated wise monarch Solomon was guilty of dereliction from the simplest religious faith that man can entertain—from the worship of the one great Spirit that made and supports the world—to the grossest idolatry that was practised in the barbarian countries around him,—or whether this be only an indication of the venomous spirit of a priesthood that could not endure in him the first manifestations in Israel of an enlightened toleration. We find that the four biographers of Christ have their different characteristics, and they bear as strongly on them the peculiarity of their different characters as they exhibit the unity of the character which was the object of those records. The Jewish tendency of Matthew, the Jewish proselyte character of Mark, the Gentile proselyting character of Luke, and the orientalism of the apostle John—these are all coloured media through which the character of Christ is exhibited, and in many points exhibited almost in contrast, in the writings of the four evangelists. How, then, can absolute historical truth —a thing which scarcely, perhaps, exists in the world—be expected in scripture, any more than in other records of the times that are gone by?

Another notion of the truth of scripture is, that it consists of strictly verbal truth, carried into every phrase, every expression, every sentence, which the scriptures contain. They are all to be received as independent, abstract, universal, infallible propositions. The incongruity of this seems to have struck some minds, whilst others adhere to

the notion as that which alone can distinguish and constitute a Christian. A statesman in our own times, led by his position to dabble in theology, once called the creed of the Church of England the thirty-nine articles of Christianity. Why, if this notion of verbal truth be correct, there are not merely thirty-nine articles of Christianity, but thirty-nine thousand articles of Christianity. Every sentence of the New Testament becomes an article of Christianity, a divine revelation, an infallible proposition, before which reason must bow its head abashed and submissive in the dust. Nay, according to the same theory, the Old Testament takes its place by the side of the New; and every sentence there, too, is to be received in the same way. There would be no end of articles of truth, according to this mode of applying the expression of the truth of scripture. Restless in the writhings of common sense under such a notion, Paley has advanced a curious theory—that where the sacred writers are, as they often are, argumentative, we are to rest in their conclusions, whatever we may know of the process by which those conclusions are arrived at. We are to be sure that there is infallible truth in the conclusion of an inconclusive argument. There cannot be a better receipt than this for destroying all truthfulness and honesty of mind and purpose. A writer is false—false to the very core—if, when he advances any thing in the shape of argument, he does not intend it to be judged of as argument. He comes into the court of opinion avowing that he makes his appeal to the judgment, and that he has certain inducements to lay before the judgment to lead it to adopt such and such a conclusion. The very mode of writing becomes a falsehood, if thus his argument is not weighed in the balance of reason—if it is not to be estimated according to its inherent worth.

This falsehood in theology has extended itself into other departments; and in a political pamphlet lately published, emanating from one of the legislators of the country, we are told that if statesmen adopt certain purposes—if they are justified in adopting certain plans—they are justified in adopting arguments by which those plans are recommended: as if arguments were cups and balls to play with; as if arguments were merely bullets to be fired against opponents; as if arguments were any thing but what they

are, real premises, to be received as facts by the mind of the reasoner, and inferences legitimately drawn from these by his intellect, and presented to others as truth because they are truth to himself. On such a principle as that to which I have adverted, all reasoning, even when it is correct, bears the character of sophistry, because it is not engaged in with an honest and a truthful spirit—it is not the presenting of the fruits of mind to mind—it is only the jugglery of one who, if he is right in the end, is wrong in the means by which he would recommend it to others; seeing those means are adapted to what he may deem error and prejudice, instead of being the genuine fruits of reason and of truth.

Nor do I imagine that dogmatic truth is that which can properly be respected as the truth of scripture. Throughout the whole history of the Old and New Testaments, I find nowhere the divine communication of abstract and universal principles. All is given as circumstances occurred; it applies to the people to whom it was addressed, and to the circumstances under which it arose. The Ten Commandments, now continually exhibited in our churches as a compendium of the moral laws of God, simply stood in their original communication as the introductory precepts and principles of the political and social code of the Jewish people. The directions of Christ to his followers were remarkably adapted to their peculiar condition, to their prospects, to the state of men whose mission called on them for the abandonment of all the common occupations of human life, and to go forth trusting in Providence, in a way in which Providence does not invite men in our times and circumstances to trust in its certain and special care over them. There is on all the stamp of peculiarity, in which general principles are indeed involved that constitute moral truth and power; but for these we must go far deeper than to the mere language of ecclesiastical dogma.

Perhaps I cannot better illustrate the distinction I would draw between canonical, historical, argumentative or dogmatic, and moral truth, than by taking a passage from the Old Testament, which I think remarkably combines untruthfulness as to what is commonly deemed the technical truth of scripture with real universal moral truth, such as commends itself to the common heart of humanity. And the

passage to which I shall go for this purpose is a well-known one, which, for my present purpose, I must read through for illustration. It is the 139th Psalm, entitled "A Psalm of David." I read it from the version of Noyes, the American translator; for, notwithstanding our munificent endowments and establishments in this country, it is to American voluntaryism that we are indebted for the best version of the book of Psalms into our language that has been yet produced.

"*A Psalm of David.*

"O Lord, thou hast searched me and known me;
Thou knowest my resting and my rising;
Thou understandest my thoughts from afar;
Thou seest my path and my lying down,
And art acquainted with all my ways!
Before the word is upon my tongue,
Behold, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether!
Thou enclosest me behind and before,
And layest thine hand upon me!
Such knowledge is too wonderful for me:
It is high, I cannot attain to it!
Whither shall I go from thy spirit,
And whither shall I flee from thy presence?
If I ascend into heaven, thou art there;
If I make my bed in hades, behold, thou art there!
Should I take the wings of the morning,
And dwell in the remotest parts of the sea,
Even there shall thy hand lead me,
And thy right hand shall hold me!
If I say, Surely the darkness shall conceal me;
Even the night shall be light about me:
Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee,
But the night shineth as the day:
The darkness and the light are both alike to thee!
For thou didst form my reins:
Thou didst shelter me in my mother's womb.
I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made;
Marvellous are thy works,
And this my soul knoweth full well!
My substance was not hidden from thee,
When I was made in secret;
When I was curiously wrought in the lower parts of the earth.
Thine eyes did see my substance, while yet unformed;
And in thy book was every thing written:
My days were appointed, before one of them existed.
How incomprehensible to me are thy thoughts, O God!
How immense their sum!
If I should count them, they would outnumber the sand;
When I awake, I am still with thee!

O that thou wouldst slay the wicked, O God!
Ye men of blood, depart from me!
For they speak evil against thee:
Thine enemies are lifted up to utter impiety.
Do I not hate them that hate thee, O Jehovah?
Do I not abhor them that rise up against thee?
Yea, I hate them with perfect hatred;
I count them mine enemies.
Search me, O God, and know my heart;
Try me, and know my thoughts;
And see if there be any idolatrous way in me,
And lead me in the ancient way!"

This psalm possesses, I think, in a high degree, the moral truth which I regard as the truth of scripture—the only truth of scripture that is worthy of discussion, or that makes the Bible a grand and a powerful book in human history; while, at the same time, it violates every one of those notions of scripture truth which theologians are accustomed to render prominent. For instance, canonical truth. The psalm is called "A Psalm of David." Such is the title. It is under the notion of that title being a correct one that it stands in what is professed by theologians to be a collection of the writings of a man who composed under a peculiar divine influence. There is evident internal evidence in the psalm that it is not a psalm of David's composing. The dates of many compositions in the Hebrew scriptures may be discriminated by this circumstance: their language underwent a change during the captivity; with the antique Hebrew phraseology and words were intermixed forms of speech that were peculiarly Chaldean. These are not found in compositions anterior to that period; and they are, as might be expected, found more or less frequently in compositions subsequent to that period. Now, this psalm has some of those peculiar modes of speech; it has Chaldaism in its construction and in its words, and it is fixed thereby, I apprehend, to a date subsequent to the captivity. So that the very first common notion of the truth of scripture, namely, that of canonical truth, fails here—breaks down; and if the doctrine is to be founded on the psalm, and that doctrine rest on the notion of inspiration, and that inspiration be associated with the name of David, why, the whole apparatus and machinery passes away, leaving the truth, if truth it be, that was sought to be established,

to find some other basis whereon to rest. Neither has the psalm that scientific truth which should belong to writings of which every word is inspired by the Deity, and which has led many, by their belief that such was the case, to persecute those who were making discoveries and advances in scientific knowledge. The description of the formation of the human frame obviously throws out of the question the agency of second causes and natural operations, and supposes a more immediate divine agency than is known actually to exist. And the reference to the east and to the west,—

> "Should I take the wings of the morning,
> And" (I believe it should be *or*) "dwell in the remotest parts of the sea,"—

this description of the morning and the evening goes on the old idea which commended itself to men's senses, of the sun sinking down into the sea at night in the west, and rising up again out of it the following morning in the east; and I can see no reason to suppose that any idea of poetical license of expression, or accommodation to popular prejudice, rather than his own idea, led the writer to use this phraseology, because it is the fact that such were the common notions of the learned and of the unlearned—of the most philosophical and of the most uninformed; and we must now employ a certain degree of accommodation in the use of phraseology which has outlived the time when it represented actual belief. So that we have not here infallible science, any more than we have strictly canonical authority. But, to go further than this, the psalm violates dogmatic truth. The Articles of the Church of England tell us of the spirituality of the Deity, and justly tell us of it. The New Testament tells us the same thing. But the writer of this psalm had clearly those humanised conceptions of the Deity which abound in all semi-civilised ages. He did not identify the Deity with all existence—he did not see every particle of matter animated and inhabited by the universal Spirit; but he saw a God who worked from without upon the world—who could pursue him with the most inconceivable rapidity—who could anticipate him in the east or in the west—whose outstretched arm was sure to encompass him—who would confront him in the heights of heaven

—whom he would encounter also in the lowest depths of hades;—his conception here appears to be that of a Power moving through space, rather than of an Existence which is spread through, and identified with, all existence—living in all life, and acting in all force. Nor is his reference to hades orthodox in point of doctrine. It certainly disagrees with the modern notion, which divides the spirits of men immediately on their departure from the body—which consigns them to eternal abodes, joyous or grievous. The hades of the writer was the state to which all the dead went—it was the unseen state—it was the shadowy world of those who had once existed upon the earth. The writer therefore commits a double violation of what is assumed as dogmatic truth. Moreover, he violates preceptive truth. He assumes the duty of hatred—he rather prides himself upon his perfect performance of that duty; he appeals to God, and in the sincerity of his heart he does so, for the perfection of his hatred of the enemies of God; and he seems almost to reproach the slackness of the Deity for not manifesting in his Providence a similar animosity.

Such are the exhibitions that the psalm makes of the extent to which writings that are incorporated in the Bible may depart from canonical truth—from scientific truth—from dogmatic and preceptive truth. Now let us take the other view of it, and see what there is here of moral truth. There are three portions of moral truth that are beautifully and powerfully expressed in this composition. We cannot read it without sympathy with the writer in his sentiment of a universal Deity. Whatever imperfections there may have been in his conception—whatever divergence there may have been from the truth which in later times has been ascertained—still, he had the feeling which belongs to religion in all times, of a beneficent Power with which we are ceaselessly in contact,—that notion which led the patriarchs to believe that the angel of the covenant—the angel of their pilgrimage—was ever with them in their wanderings, that the Deity superintended every step of their path, prepared their path before them, and stretched over them the wings of protection,—that idea which led the prophet Jonah to repent of, and grow wise from, his absurd attempt to fly from the presence of the Lord, and to recognise the God of Israel

in heathen lands as well as in the confines of Judæa,—that universal presence which Christ implied, when he told us to worship God as a spirit in spirit and in truth—which he implied when he called the Deity by the name of Father, bringing home to every heart that paternal relation which must be universal to make it efficient in such an application of moral truth—and when he said in rebuke to those who complained of his working on the Sabbath, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." Even the heathen and idolatrous nations of the earth had always a yearning and longing after the universality of a divine presence; and as their conceptions did not rise to the notion of a Spirit universally existing and operating, they imagined multitudes of divine persons, gods of hills and of plains, of land and of sea, of groves and of mountains, of heaven and of earth—thus peopling the universe with spiritual and divine power, and endeavouring by multiplicity to realise that which they had not arrived at a state to imagine in the oneness of a universal Being. This conception is intimately connected with a grandeur of thought which gives so much life even to inanimate nature, which surrounds us with feelings of security, of confidence, and of hope—by which we trace the workings of a providential scheme through all the long annals of past history—and on which we rest in an assurance of futurity. This great moral truth is embalmed in this composition—has been commended by it to the contemplation of man through a long succession of ages—and it will always by this means exercise power over the mind and heart of humanity.

A second quality of moral power in the psalm is in the description the writer gives us of his own individual character and position. He does hate God's enemies, and he says so. He does wish the wicked were annihilated, and he appeals to God to slay the wicked. His heart is intensely at variance with them, and he pours forth the intense language of that animosity. There is truth all through this expression of his own state of mind. How much better is this than is the profession of individuals or of nations before the Deity, that they forgive the trespasses of others, as they hope their own will be forgiven, and who then go on in their private or their social capacity to exercise hardness in their relations with their brethren—to be

cruel and severe and extortionate towards their debtors—to take all the pecuniary advantage they can of others—to struggle to rise in their social position by keeping others down with an iron hand—or to wage bloody fights, and stretch thousands of human beings on the field of slaughter, under consecrated banners, and call it glory! How much less incongruity would there be, if such persons had the honesty of the Hebrew psalmist, and told the Deity the sordid, atrocious, sanguinary contest which they mean to wage, and the deeds which they are about to achieve! Simplicity, sincerity, faithful profession by man of that which is in man, are moral truth—moral truth in the antagonistic Jew of old, moral truth in the beneficent and forgiving Christian who really enters into the spirit of the prayer of his Lord; but not moral truth in individuals, churches, and nations, who combine the language of the one with the disposition of the other. As the first truth of the psalm rose in ascendency over the minds of men, it tended to bring the second into unity with it, and to destroy the incongruity which there obviously is between the notion of a universal Deity and the indulgence of vindictive vengeance. The two things cannot coexist, and the sincerity that professes both would abjure one whenever the growth of that devout conception had reached a sufficient degree of elevation of mind; for how can we hate that with which God is, in which God is? how can the devotion that every where acknowledges the object of its admiration, of its truth, of its filial worship, coexist with a desire to deface God's image in his creatures, to commit injury and inflict suffering on those in whom the Deity dwells as in his temple; and who, whatever they may seem to us at the time, however their interests may clash with our interests, or their characters vary from our characters, are yet a portion of the same great plan—we may almost say, a portion of the same great one universal being—and therefore tending, though in a way that we cannot understand, towards the same glorious and blessed result?

The third moral truth of that psalm is, the aspiration that appeals to its own standard of excellence, and desires truthful conformity with that standard, even to the inmost thoughts and emotions of the soul:

> "Search me, O God, and know my heart;
> Try me, and know my thoughts;
> And see if there be any idolatrous way in me,
> And lead me in the ancient way!"—

that way which, in its antiquity, the Jews recognised as having the character of perfection in its divine origin—that way which is indeed an ancient way—or, as the common version has it, an everlasting way—because it is the same through all the varying degrees of man's progressive knowledge. To dive into the workings of his own soul—to bring unsparingly thoughts, feelings, and motives to his standard, to his notion of the moral qualities of the God whom he adores, with the same sincerity and earnestness with which he expresses that which is in him—to strive to realise within himself all that he conceives of true and beautiful, of great and good,—this was religion under the Mosaic dispensation—this was religion when Christ taught his followers—and this is religion now, and will be while human nature exists, whether in its earthly relations, or with those expanded powers which it may assume in its eternal state. Here, then, we have the truth of scripture, and here the worth, power, and glory of scripture—moral truth, that, independent of antiquity, independent of science, or of history, or of creeds and articles of faith, has only to be exhibited, to be recognised; and when recognised, sinks into the heart, and is sure to bear its fruit in the life and character. This is truth of real worth—this may be universal—this does not imply antiquarian knowledge and curious research—this does not imply the accumulation of scientific principles; still less does it imply subserviency to the imposition of forms of doctrine or of worship: it only implies that man is giving free scope to that which is within him—letting his own moral nature have free play in its tendencies, and promptly and gladly and impressively recognising that which is in everlasting accordance with his moral being. This is truth for which the scripture deserves to be understood, which individuals should have recourse to in the regulation of their own minds, hearts, and lives—which societies, nations, and churches should recognise, as that which is of far more worth than the doctrines or practices which they have only rendered sectarian lines of demarcation—this is the power in the Bible that makes it endure,

that gives it equal force upon the wise and the ignorant—upon those of a remote and barbarous age, and those enjoying the highest degree of civilisation at which the world has yet arrived. Thus does religion commend itself to reason—to reason in its simplicity, and through all the gradations of its advance—to reason, the emanation of divine intelligence in man—to reason, the supreme presiding power in man's mind, in which court of authority truth and falsehood are brought for trial, and where they must bear the judgment passed upon them—to reason, which, in its first operation, may be like the bubbling of a glittering fountain, but which goes on through the varied scenery of life, swelling and expanding like some mighty river, until at last it is united to, it is for ever identified with, the mighty ocean, the boundless sea, of divine knowledge, intelligence, and love.

RELIGIOUS WORSHIP.

April 28th, 1839.

Religious worship is a state of mind. Ceremonials and forms, the use of words precomposed or extemporaneous,—these may be its expression, but they do not constitute its essence. For that we must endeavour to analyse the truths, the dispositions, the tendencies, the emotions, which are combined in the soul when it is in that solemn and elevated state to which we attach the name of religious worship. There is a recognition not merely by a logical belief, but as it were by a spiritual perception, of the divine presence—of a Mind, an almighty and beneficent Mind, universally diffused, living, glowing, acting in every thing around us and within us, in ourselves and in our thoughts and faculties, in our powers and actions. There is a communion with this Spirit—a going forth, as it were, of feeling towards it—the exercise of admiration, of confidence, of love and hope. There is a faith in the consciousness of this universal Mind of that which is passing in us, a oneness with it, which is properly termed communion with the Father of all spirits; and in this there cannot but be a sense of the reception of its influences upon ourselves,—of the coming, flowing, pouring in upon us, as it were, from all external objects, and from the reflectiveness that is in our own spirits, of that Being with whom we are one, in whom we live, move, and have our being, whose thoughts are all existence, and whose purposes are all events.

Such a state may be excited in the human mind by various agencies; it may be called forth by the appearances of nature, as it was in the shepherd-boy, the sweet singer of Israel, as he exclaimed, "When I consider the heavens, the work of thy hands, the moon and the stars which thou

hast ordained : Lord, what is man that thou art mindful of him ?" It may be called forth—it often is—by an extraordinary personal occurrence, by imminent danger, from which the mind turns to the Power that it knows is adequate to deliverance, with a sense of gratitude for the past, or of hope for the future. It is produced when, in the exercise of the reason and judgment, we look over the pages of history, whether sacred or profane, and contemplate the wondrous combination of men of different characters, of different ages and countries, for useful action upon their fellow-creatures,—each one aiding to build up the temple of God in humanity. And it may be exhibited by the social principle, when one says to another, " Come, let us go up to the house of the Lord." It naturally arises out of the contemplation of our own being, the study of life with its wondrous attributes, the consideration of death with its strange apparent torpidity,—and the hope natural to man, the very bursting forth of life that is in death, and that shall spring up out of death and triumph over death, and show that it is the pervading and triumphant principle of universal being.

As worship has its stimulants, so are there also its abuses; and they are of continual occurrence. It is perverted, like all great faculties, like all great opportunities,—it is perverted in a manner as mischievous and depressing as its right use is purifying and exalting. It is perverted when it is linked with the inculcation of dogma, when it is made merely to answer the purpose of fixing more firmly in the intellect, in the mind, certain propositions. There are those who tell us that they are confirmed in their opinions, because they feel them most strongly when they pray : and no wonder; their prayers being founded upon those opinions and conceptions,—and religious worship, the noblest state of the human spirit, being made only an agency for the paltry purpose of enforcing and strengthening the influence of a creed. Yet even in this way there are limits to the abuses which it is practicable to introduce. Although all great powers, faculties, and opportunities are liable to gross abuse, yet they also have, by their own nature, by the inherent power and principle of good that is in them, the means of restraining those abuses to a certain extent. The doctrine, for instance, of vindictive and eternal torment never incor-

porates itself with prayer; no man prays for it—no man, however sturdily he may profess his faith therein, makes that faith the object of adoration or of petition—no man especially worships God and glorifies him for consigning any of his creatures to remediless, infinite, eternal misery—no man prays that his fellow-creatures may be consigned to this. Even those who drink the most deeply of the doctrines of predestination, of election, and of reprobation,—even they are all restorationists in their prayers; and when they bend the knee before him whom they recognise as the God of mercy, the feeling of mercy supersedes the terrors of their creed.

Worship is abused when it is directed to preternatural operations; when, by its agency, men seek to realise that which, according to the laws of nature,—laws which prevail both in the material and in the moral world,—can only be effected by their own continuous exertions. They call this faith in Providence: it is disbelief in Providence; for if we believe in Providence, Providence tells us that by exertions energetically directed such and such results may be achieved,—but without them, expectancy is a vain delusion. Worship is perverted when it is made the substitute for moral good, when it is supposed to include all excellence of character.

But, whatever may be its abuse, it is a genuine expression of human nature, it is one of the tendencies of nature. The subject of the present lecture, religious worship, is not a point to discuss; it is a fact to contemplate and analyse. We find it in the history of man, in the earliest periods that can be traced of his being—we find it in all the conditions of man that are found to exist, from the most savage to the most civilised states of being—we find it under all forms and modes of belief—man is a worshiping being: we find it in the modifications of thought amongst those who even refuse, in terms, to recognise a God. The atheist worships—worships when the lofty mountain, or the rolling ocean, or some manifestation of human genius or power, strikes him with veneration—when it makes him feel the superiority of the influences and agencies that exist to any thing within himself, and when it gives him the sense, nevertheless, of oneness with them in being, and in the operation of the complicated plan in which we are all included. In that feeling of veneration there is worship, there is testimony to

the fact that worship is essential to man's being. It cannot be reasoned down—it is not a thing to encounter by argument; it is to be contemplated as we contemplate the leaves of a tree, or the petals of a blossom, or the grains in an ear of wheat; it is one of the facts—one of the moral facts—of human existence, into which we may inquire, but about which we can raise no controversy. And the inquiry at which I would briefly glance this morning is, into the modes of its expression, chiefly its voluntary expression, and their perniciousness when they are transformed into positive institutions.

Prayer is always a sort of verbal expression. Every strong feeling tends to clothe itself in language: it is the mode in which man's mind goes forth, and gives reality and permanence to the sensations which pass over him, like the clouds over the skies in a changing gale. By this he not only communicates it to others, but he gives it fixity and permanence as to himself. In all religions, under all mythologies—with whatever symbolical actions it may have been accompanied—we find worship shaping itself into words. Even Homer's heroes, in the clang of battle, and amidst all the energy and instantaneous exertion of their fierce contests,—even they are represented as breathing a few words of petition to the tutelary deity, to the god of arms, in whom they trusted for victory over the combatants to whom they were opposed. Man ever realises to himself and to others sensation, feeling, thought, a state of mind, by the use of words: and if words are employed to embody a state of mind so peculiar as that of religious worship, it seems almost needless to remark, that they should be of the simplest and truest description. For simplicity and brevity, —for the enunciation only of man's leading and common wants,—for a confiding and filial spirit,—for a kindness towards others, keeping pace step by step with the kindness which man himself desires to experience from Him in whose hands is all power,—for the absence of all servile and degrading deprecations of wrath and vengeance,—for a natural succession of emotions, beginning with large and lofty views of Providence, of heaven, earth, and humanity, and, as they become more individualised, realising whatever is best and most good and kind in the individual,—for all that can recommend a form of words as the expression of the com-

munion of man's spirit with his Maker,—there is no model to be found comparable to the prayer that Christ taught his disciples. And what power has it not exercised over the human mind! How interesting would be its history, could we trace its agency through countless millions of human spirits, under all the unbounded diversity of their circumstances, from the time when it was taught by him to his followers, as they rambled over the plains of Judæa! It has been repeated by the martyr amid his sufferings at the stake—by the patriot, in the gloom of his solitary dungeon —by the pining sufferer, on the couch of hopeless sickness —by the energetic philanthropist, in the contemplation of his arduous and generous exertions—by the philosopher, in the quiet of his study, and amid his intellectual pursuits —by the worn-out labourer, retiring from the scene of his toils to his brief hours of rest—by those who have dwelt under the most iron terrors of despotism—and by those who have enjoyed all the luxuries of political freedom. It has been connected with all the pomp of Catholic worship, and with the sternest simplicity of Presbyterian worship; it has been uttered in all languages, from the Oriental dialects in their multitudinousness, to the tongues of modern Europe; it has been breathed forth through various ages: under the reign of the Cæsars it was breathed forth, Christians consorting together beneath the shadow of the night, in retreating caverns; in Christian Rome it was alike the language of orthodox and of heretical churches, while the strife of Arius and Athanasius shook the theological world; it was repeated by the warlike Goths and Saxons, when they prevailed over nations that had borne the palm over the world for arms and arts and civilisation; its influence was felt during the predominance of Papal tyranny over the mind, through the convulsions of the Reformation, and amid the shocks of revolution; in our own country, it has been uttered by thousands and by millions in public and in private through all the different dynasties that have reigned over these kingdoms—in Norman days, and under the Plantagenets, Tudors, Stuarts, and Guelphs; it has been the language of man in the first faint glimmerings of knowledge, as it was the breaking in upon his previous state of ignorance; and it has been his language when that light has beamed most brightly around him—illumi-

nation that has been realised in the past, the present, the future: and in all it has guided, revived, and purified; it has been a communion between God and man. The history of these words would be the history of the grandest of all realities.

Worship has always sought local expression. The patriarchs marked the place where they adored, and where, in visionary meditation, they believed themselves to have received peculiar influences from on high, by erecting their simple pillar or altar there, and thus giving it a species of consecration, by association at least, to their own memories, and to future times. These simple memorials, these commemorative pillars, assumed, in other times, the form of Druidical circles. Men in early ages had recourse to Nature's temples—they worshiped in high places. The mountain seemed to lift them nearer heaven; the prospect which it commanded gave them a larger view of this world, to whose governing Power they rendered their homage. They worshiped in woods and groves; silence, shade, and solitude seemed to realise more distinctly to them that Power which is present in the darkness as in the light, which holds communion with man in his retirement from his fellows, more distinctly, perhaps, than when they are associated together for their expression of supplication or of thanksgiving. The Jews built their "Proseuches,"* or prayer-houses, by the side of rivers; they felt how rapidly the stream of life was flowing away with them, or they saw in rivers the messengers of fertility and bounty through widespread regions, and they obeyed the monition to render homage to him who is the fountain of all good, and whose mercies, as experienced in human life, still flowing on, promised to terminate at last in a boundless ocean of blessedness. And as society advanced, as the powers of man in intellect and in the arts were developed, temples of human construction were substituted, and were thought more sacred than those which Nature had formed; and then they arose in their magnificence, with their pillars and portals, and in all the splendour and with all the skill that from time to time could be realised—endeavouring to honour God by presenting to him the offerings of human agency as em-

* These buildings were open at the top, often overarched by trees, and not covered in like synagogues.—Ed.

bodied in their most enduring form, the architectural. And when it was taught that God is not in temples made with hands—when the sacredness of places became a superstition to be denounced by him who declared that not on this or on that mountain, that neither in Samaria nor in Jerusalem merely, should men worship God, but that their spirits should call on the pervading Spirit in any place whatever, all being holy ground—then did simplicity take the place of splendour in the buildings which were dedicated to worship and instruction; and in the plainest form, and under the humblest arrangements, they witnessed the outpouring of hearts to God.

As to expression, all this is true and beautiful. The technical consecration of places is the abuse of it, the perversion which priestcraft has introduced,—desecrating, as it were, the whole surface of God's fair and holy earth, in order that it may turn to some paltry advantage of gain or influence its own selection of this or that restricted locality. Hence men have felt as if God were not even in his own world, were not in the crowded city, were not in the solitary field or forest—as if he were only within the compass of buildings which man had erected, of buildings which priests had taken under their peculiar charge, of localities where separation and restriction were the associations most powerfully impressed upon the mind, and where all that should be made elevating and expanding has been directed to the purpose of narrowing, restricting, and abasing. Not that I apprehend that the expression of worship is only linked with the contemplation of what may be most grand or beautiful in nature—not but that there is a religion of places without superstition; and a proper national worship will be that which provides alike and offers alike fairly, for the use of all, localities at once simple and most convenient, localities also the most grand and imposing. If nature displays all the rich combinations that grandeur and that loveliness can form, why should not human genius be stimulated to do the like? Why should not a building, church, cathedral, or temple, or whatever it may be called, arise and present itself to our sight, with its lofty towers, and with its innumerable adornments, and receive the images of the illustrious dead—encompassing us there with their pale, speaking forms, a cloud of witnesses telling us also to run with patience the

race that is set before us? Why should not the power which gives life and variety and colour to canvas be there also, speaking to us as nature speaks to us in her own rich diversity and beautiful combinations of form and colour, and calling on man to recognise his God in the works of intelligence as well as in those of material combination?

Worship expresses itself symbolically. The first forms of worship were symbolical. Fruits were offered on the altar, animals were sacrificed there, incense rendered its delicate sensation, the flame arose towards heaven, as if it would mimic by its material powers the aspirations of the spirit of the worshiper—every thing was thrown, as it were, into picture—and the working of man's soul within was typified by his sacrifice and its ascending flame without. To this, in the East, other symbolical actions were added. Purification was practised there by the ceremony of baptism, of baptism that was chiefly performed in the flowing stream; and in the last meeting of Christ and his disciples, he brake the bread between them as an emblem of the unity of feeling which he desired them to preserve, in the common remembrance of him which he would enshrine in their minds. Again we see beauty, because we perceive spontaneous expression—the emotion goes forth into the action; there is no substitution of external action for internal feeling, but there is the attempt to realise without what already is the surest of realities within. The mischief, again, has been that of converting expression into institution; not forms of sacrifice, indeed, but those of the ablutions, and of the paschal ceremonial, have been enforced in our time, as if they were the essentials of all religion—as if in these external actions there was some charm that was to operate like the fabled witchcraft of olden times—as if without them a man could not be a Christian—as if all that belongs to the inward and spiritual being were to be conveyed into it by rites which derive their only worth from being the overflowing of the soul within. Viewed as a natural manifestation, symbolical religion will hold its place as long as human nature endures; for there is a tendency in our being to this pictorial sort of expression, which deserves to be encouraged, so long as it is not degraded and rendered mere form by institution. The scriptures are most completely symbolical; they begin with this form of delineation, and they end with

it. What are the Mosaic descriptions of the creation, the fall, the story of Cain and Abel, of the flood—what are they all, but symbolical theories of transactions, or of the commencement of the system of human affairs—in the same way as the Apocalypse is full of similar mythical delineations, of like symbols of the anticipated progress of events? And what is the life of Christ itself? what is the history of that pure and perfect being? though every recorded syllable may be the strictest external and historical truth,—yet what is its essence and great power, its truth and beauty, but this—that Christ was the symbolical representative of human nature, that in him we see its strength, in him its endurance, in him its destiny of suffering and of triumph? It is when Christ is most identified with humanity, when we most completely enter into the view of his character as representing, as it were, the human race, that we feel most strongly the power of those words which were spirit and life.

I have recently met with some beautiful remarks on the character of Christ thus considered as essentially and intensely human, and by being so as also being one with God, in the lecture or address recently delivered at the Divinity College, Cambridge, in the United States, by Mr. Emerson. Addressing himself to those who were, in after life, to be teachers of religion, he thus adverts to the character of Christ:

"Jesus Christ belonged to the true race of prophets. He saw, with open eye, the mystery of the soul. Drawn by its severe harmony, ravished with its beauty, he lived in it, and had his being there. Alone in all history, he estimated the greatness of man. He saw that God incarnates himself in man, and evermore goes forth anew to take possession of his world. He said, in this jubilee of sublime emotion, 'I am divine; through me, God acts; through me, speaks. Would you see God, see me: or see thee, when thou also thinkest as I now think.' But what a distortion did his doctrine and memory suffer in the same, in the next, and in the following ages! There is no doctrine of the reason which will bear to be taught by the understanding. The understanding caught this high chant from the poet's lips, and said, in the next age, 'This was Jehovah come down out of heaven; I will kill you if you say he

was a man.' The idioms of his language and the figures of his rhetoric have usurped the place of his truth; and churches are not built upon his principles, but upon his tropes. Christianity became a mythos, as the poetic teaching of Greece and of Egypt before. He spake of miracles; for he felt that man's life was a miracle, and all that man doeth; and he knew that this daily miracle shines as the character ascends. But the word 'miracle,' as pronounced by Christian churches, gives a false impression; it is 'monster.' It is not one with the blowing clover and the falling rain. He felt respect for Moses and the prophets; but no unfit tenderness at postponing their initial revelations to the hour and the man that now is, to the eternal revelation in the heart. Thus was he a true man. Having seen that the law in us is commanding, he would not suffer it to be commanded. Thus is he, as I think, the only soul in history who has appreciated the worth of man."

Worship has always tended to express itself socially. Even in sacrifices there was frequently a combination of persons, all of whom were alike interested: sometimes they were offered avowedly for multitudes. In all man's mightiest emotions, he has a tendency towards the development of the social principle; and while some forms of religious thought impel towards the deepest solitude, other forms, tending towards the same results, demand participation. At first this object was accomplished by the gathering together even of an entire nation, at stated festivals, for the common expression of their homage to the Deity. Then we find sectional devotion arising in the Jewish sects. Since that period the social principle has been combined with sectarian division, the demarcations of creed have marked out the limits within which men thus unite, and the very purposes of union have been made subservient to those of separation and even of hostility. Again we see a true principle verging towards abuse; nor is the subject without difficulty as relates to social expression. It implies that different minds can, to a considerable extent, be in the same state at the same time. That it should be so, implies more congeniality of character than can be at all reasonably expected in a miscellaneous assemblage of persons; and there are, therefore, many obstacles to realising any thing like a true social expression of worship, in the present con-

dition of society. I do not see that this is done by the prolonged extemporary forms that are generally used in Dissenting chapels. I am certain that it is not accomplished by the prescribed forms which the Church repeats from Sunday to Sunday, and which become the mere outer shell and husk of devotion, with none of its inward vitality. All that I have found myself able to do in encountering this difficulty is, to trust to my own feelings, to express the views that possess my own mind at the time, hoping that they are not so peculiar but that, to some considerable extent, there may be sympathy with them amongst those in whose hearing they are pronounced; and that where there is not that sympathy, those who do not feel it will merely regard themselves as auditors, treating with the respect which is due to truth in others, that which they may not recognise as truth to their own thoughts and feelings.

I cannot now enlarge on what would well deserve to be the subject of one or more lectures in itself, the poetical expression of worship; but it has always sought such expression—we owe to it the grandest forms of poetry; the lyric ode, the drama, the combination of the arts with poetry, the psalm, the oratorio,—these have been its natural expression: it has given to itself the voice of music, it has from the earliest period poured itself forth in metrical sounds by charming the ear, and it has stimulated the deepest thoughts and grandest conceptions of the best minds of our race. The only further peculiarity—which I would conclude with noticing—is this, that Christianity has conjoined the expression of worship with the use of instruction, with oral instruction. Forms of worship, while not thus accompanied, were much more liable to abuse than they now are; they were much more liable to be made the mere instruments of priestcraft over the mind, or to degenerate into a deeper superstition; but here is a corrective provided: and in the practice of Christians, from the earliest time, of accompanying worship with instruction, we find that which, if not always able to stem the tide of error and of enthusiasm, yet gives the promise of redemption, and the means of usefulness, whenever an appropriate time shall arrive.

The pulpit may have been as much abused as have been forms of worship; its office may have been narrowed to theological technicality; it may have satisfied itself with

textual expositions that have often been textual perversions; it may have excluded a great range of subjects most deeply interesting to human thought and feeling; it may have disregarded whatever was practically the most important to man upon the earth,—the duties of the passing hour,—to which his attention and his energy should be directed; it may have thrown overboard all historic truth and scientific knowledge, and every thing needful to coöperate with theological speculation, in order to give the mind any sound perception of the works of Him whom we worship as the universal Creator and Ruler; but still, whatever its perversion, there is the practice, there is the combination established and recognised by the world, affording the means for giving truth a voice so that it may reach the heart, and for employing that oral instruction that has ever been to man so much more effective than any other kind of instruction, in order to elicit from man's own moral feelings a response that shall put to flight and shame the vanities of conventionalism. And I believe that, as this mode of useful influence will become, and is even now becoming, better understood,—and as it is better understood, better applied, than hitherto it has been,—it is one which may escape the corruptions to which other systems of professed instruction are liable, it is one in which the honest human heart may be able to give a voice to truth and feeling when other modes fail: and thus, although the press were to become the mere tool of interest and of property—although the courts of law were to become only scenes of wrangling and quibbling, instead of courts for the rational administration of impartial justice —if senatorial halls were only to be the scene of gladiatorial contests between ambitious partisans,—still, in the pulpit, in the oral instruction for which Sunday affords the opportunity, and to which the worship of God gives solemnity,—still there may be found a voice which, like the word of the Lord in ancient times, may go forth from his holy hill—the word of the Lord to all nations, commanding the heavens to give ear, and the earth to hearken.

NATIONAL EDUCATION: A CRITICISM ON BISHOP BLOMFIELD.

May 5th, 1839.

The subject of national education is one of such paramount interest and importance, that I seldom pass by any occasion for bringing it under your notice. It is of paramount interest and importance, not merely with regard to its ultimate realisation as one of the grandest objects, but also in the mere discussion of the subject, while it continues a matter of inquiry and of debate. Realised, it would indeed be the grandest public good that any nation could achieve, one which would raise the character of our country, and give it the high preëminence claimed for it of old—the prerogative of "teaching the nations how to live;" and, in combination with this great public good, it would also include the highest aggregate of individual advantage: the benefit would not merely belong to society as a whole, but it would flow through every part, from the highest to the lowest, in all giving humanity better facilities for the development of its powers and faculties, and a larger capacity for the reception of that enjoyment which it was formed by its Creator to receive. And while it is only a theme of discussion, still what incidental good, to an incalculable amount, results from the inquiries that are set on foot into the condition of the great masses of the community! An unknown world is explored—new forms of social being (often, unhappily, only the variegated shapes of misery) are distinguished—the elements of the most pressing social evils are ascertained—a moral analysis of a great extent of topics is instituted, and man is made to feel with man—man in a state of mental cultivation and of moral progress is made to sympathise with, and to acknowledge, a brother in his degradation, and is stimulated to do something for

the amelioration of his condition. Education itself becomes better understood in these discussions, and to understand education is to understand human nature. The comprehension of culture, as far as it goes and is correct, is the comprehension of the being who is to be cultivated, of the native endowments of his constitution, of its tendencies, of the developments of which it is capable, of the varieties which it will probably exhibit in its full maturity, and of the action of those varieties in carrying out and completing the great scheme of Divine Providence.

Education, therefore, national education, is a topic well worthy to be touched upon whenever any occasion occurs that to its own inherent and enduring interest adds the accidental interest of some temporary discussion. And an occasion of this sort I have met with in the report, yesterday morning, of a remarkable speech delivered on the evening before (Friday evening) in the House of Lords, by the Bishop of London; which seems to be a prepared manifesto, on his own part and on that of the Church of which he is one of the rulers, on the subject of national education, on the mode of its accomplishment, and on the steps which have been taken by those in authority towards preparing the way for it. It is, perhaps, scarcely necessary that I should explain the circumstances that have led to the issuing of such manifesto: they are simply the withholding this year of the government grants to those schools called National and Lancasterian, and the application of a small sum, under the direction of the Committee of the Privy Council, to the purpose of forming a normal school, a school for the instruction of teachers, and, in connection with this, a model school, in which the notions which prevail amongst those authorities of national education are to be carried into effect. The scheme implies a combination of the different sectarian denominations of the country in one plan: it supposes that, to a certain extent, a general religious knowledge and feeling may be communicated to pupils in the regular course of instruction by those who have the different departments of science and knowledge under their charge, and that doing more than this may be provided for by religious teachers in proportion to the number of children of different sects included in the schools. On this scheme the Bishop of London has animadverted with some severity,

and it is to some of the leading points of that animadversion that I would direct your attention, not in a controversial spirit, but because they bring before us some of the most important subjects involved, not only in national education, but in any education whatever—questions of morality, of human nature, and of the rights of conscience. The first section of the speech to which I refer is merely introductory, but still it contains some things which cannot be passed over. The report runs thus:

"The Bishop of London rose to move for a copy of the minute of the proceedings of the Privy Council on the subject of education. He said that it had already been laid before the other house of Parliament. Although a brief document, it embodied principles of the deepest importance to the welfare of the country at large. Having been presented to the other house, it had found its way to the public, and thus he (the Bishop of London) had an opportunity of seeing it. In looking over it, he had been anxious to find some development, or at least indication, of a scheme which might be calculated to remove some of the chief difficulties which had hitherto stood in the way of such a system of national education as might, to a certain extent, comprise and conciliate all parties. He must candidly confess, however, that he ought not to have expected such a scheme, for a long experience had taught him to believe that, in the present state of religious feeling in this country, such a scheme was wholly impossible. He wished to abstain from any language which might give offence, but he must say that he did not expect to see such a scheme as was embodied in those papers. On the present occasion, it would be, perhaps, impertinent in him, and irrelevant, to trespass at length upon their lordships in reference to this subject, all-important as it was; but he could not refrain from shortly describing his view of this scheme, by saying that it appeared to him, on the most mature, and he hoped not uncandid, consideration, to have all the vices of the Irish system of education, without the justification, or rather palliation, which might, perhaps, be found in the very peculiar and unfortunate circumstances of the sister island. He must say that there was no necessity for such a scheme, nor any thing like that which was proposed by the Committee of the Privy Council."

I am very sorry the experience of the metropolitan bishop should have led him to a strong conviction that any union of religious parties for the purpose of education is totally impracticable. Whatever the strength of sectarianism may be, where there is a strong conviction in the ruling power that it ought to give way to a great public good, it has generally been found not very difficult to make it give way; and in other countries—countries which have deprived our own land of its ancient glory — countries which have taken the lead of us in the path of national education—it has been found very practicable indeed to bring together those whose creeds were of a most hostile description, and to merge the evil, the abominable and destructive evil, of sectarian antagonism in the union, light, and knowledge of moral training and of mental development. However, we must allow to each person his own right of drawing conclusions from his own observations, provided he states them fairly, frankly, and truthfully; but I am sorry to say, the passage I have just read does show that even spiritual peers are not exempt from the easily besetting sin of public men, and through them of private ones too, in this country—of obscuring, of biasing, of perverting the truthfulness of their own minds, to the purposes of effect. It is the great evil in the public speaking and in the writing of this country, that those who attempt to persuade others are so rarely true to themselves —that what they say or write can so seldom be taken as a faithful copy of what passes within their own minds; and that it is not so, may be evidenced by the incongruities which cannot happen where a man is steadily pursuing the course of his own real thoughts. In doing that, it is impossible that he should bring together discordant declarations of thought or feeling. He may be ignorant, he may be prejudiced, he may be erroneous in a thousand different ways; but so long as he merely speaks the conviction and feeling of one individual mind, in all the ignorance that there may be, in all the prejudices that may be traceable, there will still be a harmony between each one of his expressions and all the rest: they will present no incompatibilities, no anomalies, no such decided incongruities as would imply the existence of different systems of thought and feeling. Now, for instance, the bishop pro-

fesses himself to have been anxious to find indications of a system, which system he declares "long experience" had convinced him was "impossible," and which he finishes by stating to be altogether unnecessary: he expects at once to find that which he thinks to be utterly impossible, and which, whether it be possible or not, he deems unnecessary. Here is an implication of three distinct and incompatible states of mind, which we are called on to believe exist in the same person in reference to the same subject. Now, we might go far to find a mathematician who should declare, on the publication of a work relating to science, that he had earnestly endeavoured to discover the perpetual motion or the quadrature of the circle; and if he made such declaration, we should find no mathematician coupling it with his assent to the conviction that these two things were impossible; nor to the declaration that he expected an impossibility, would he add the declaration that he thought it unnecessary. But make a mathematician a politician, even though you invest his political character with whatever sacredness religious functions may bestow upon it, and he may then say all these things, because he will have become infected with the prevalent plague in this country —that of sacrificing internal truth to external effect upon the minds of others. This incongruity, this deplorable sacrifice of individuality, of intellectual and moral being, to what it is thought will tell upon others, and pass current with society, is one reason why there is less moral power put forth in our times than has often been manifested when there may have been less, perhaps, of real morality in the world. All the great writers of antiquity—all those who produced effects which the pen of the historian has recorded in the most glowing language—were distinguished by their truthfulness: and if Demosthenes excited the Athenians to cry out for arms that they might forthwith march against Philip of Macedon, it was because the speaker's own mind was imbued with the necessity of crushing despotic power—it showed that he was ready to do the like, and his own thoughts and feelings flowed in the same direction with the influences which he exercised over the souls of his hearers. And thus is it ever. There is a world of moral power waiting only to be touched by the hand of truthfulness to put it into motion,

and to win triumphs of good both for the individual and for the country, such as all the arts of the rhetorician, and all the factitious plaudits with which his gladiatorship may be honoured in assemblies that are themselves conscious of like factitiousness, can never realise, nor hope to realise. If song is but the eloquence of truth, it is the eloquence of truth that gives power to prose as well as to poetry—to spoken manifestoes as well as to written declarations. It is this which is the source of that real knowledge by which, in time, the power of evil and the strength of sinister interests will be broken down before the majesty of the common will and the common good—the one rightly directed, and the other rightly comprehended.

The next passage which I shall read to you relates to the distinguishing feature of the scheme of national education by which it is endeavoured to include all sects and denominations in the same system of instruction. On it the bishop thus comments: "The scheme proposed by the Committee of the Privy Council appeared to him to involve the very essence of latitudinarianism, in attempting to comprise in one system—if system it could be called—the religious instruction of all classes and denominations of children in this country. And if it could in any degree answer the purpose intended—namely, the combination of these classes in one system of instruction—it would not be a system of religious instruction, but a system necessarily and inevitably leading to indifference, generalism, and, lastly, to infidelity. If this principle was admitted by the legislature, the Church might as well not be connected with the State. He (the Bishop of London) protested against the principle of school establishments in which a chaplain of the Established Church was in the first instance to be paid; but in which, if the managers of the school—the Committee of the Privy Council—thought that there were a sufficient number of children of Dissenters to warrant the step, a Dissenting chaplain, called a licensed minister, was also to be paid. If the school comprehended, as was intended, a large number of children of different persuasions—and it would be probably an object with the managers to collect representatives from as many different religious bodies as possible—and if religious instruction were afforded according to the tenets of each, through a number of li-

censed teachers as chaplains, such a discordancy of opinions must have a tendency to excite the wildest latitudinarianism, or to lead the minds of the children to the belief that it was little matter what system of religious opinions they might embrace, or whether in the end they might think it necessary to embrace any." The great charge here against the system is that of latitudinarianism. And what is latitudinarianism? A theological bugbear—a cant term of controversy for the purpose of reproach—a word in itself perfectly innocent and indifferent, or which, if it have any associations with its primitive meaning, should rather excite favourable ones than associations of annoyance. It is something which has extent, which has breadth. Generally, a broad principle is something preferable to a narrow principle. Whatever is comprehensive is latitudinarian; and the objection of the bishop to the system is, therefore, that it is comprehensive; but what is there that is true, or good, or useful on any large scale, to which this term, this wonderfully obnoxious term, this term which is to excite such strange and repulsive and hostile feelings in certain classes—what is there, I say, that is true, good, and useful, to which it might not be applied? When the Articles of the Church of England were so framed that they might be subscribed, though not by the great variety of thinkers in religion, yet both by Calvinists and Arminians, the Church of England so far constituted itself a latitudinarian Church. When Milton put forth his eloquent appeal for toleration —excepting, with the infirmity of thought of his times, the Roman Catholics—excepting them as a body opposed to civil and religious freedom, as they then appeared to all other classes of the community, but making no other exception —he pleaded for latitudinarian toleration. When Locke reasoned on the essentials of Christianity—when, cutting down this tenet or dogma on one side, and that tenet or dogma on the other, he endeavoured to arrive at what marked the Christian by essential characteristics from the professor of any other religion on the face of the earth—why, he put forth a latitudinarian scheme of Christianity. When Bishop Taylor raised his voice in favour of freedom of conscience—when he took one of the first great steps towards breaking down the intolerance of past times—when, made wise by the sufferings of exile and proscription, and remem-

bering the evil days in which he and his Church had suffered shipwreck, he advanced his episcopal plea for the liberty of prophesying—why, the bishop, whose name is the brightest ornament of the Church of England, was pleading for latitudinarianism in preaching. When the apostle Paul wrote to the Christians at Rome, "Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind; why judge ye one another?" he gave a latitudinarian maxim of Christian fellowship. When the apostle Peter said to Cornelius, "Of a truth, I perceive that God is no respecter of persons; but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him," the apostle Peter preached a latitudinarian gospel to the Gentiles. When Christ said to his disciples, "Judge not one another; judge not, that ye be not judged," he taught them a latitudinarian morality. When he delivered the parable of the Good Samaritan—the heretic Samaritan, the national enemy, as he was, of the Jews—he inculcated by implication a latitudinarian patriotism and theology: and when he declared that neither in the mountain of Sychem nor in Jerusalem should man worship God—when he affirmed that times and places did not matter—that "God is a spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth," and that such were the worshipers whom the Father sought—why, he plainly declared Christian worship to be latitudinarian worship; and when he concluded his Sermon on the Mount—describing not the thorough-going believer, not the receiver of any set of articles, but the man who observed his moral precepts, as building his house upon a rock, against which the winds might vainly blow, and the torrents vainly beat—why, he then affirmed, and he elevated to the height of man's recognition and reverence, a latitudinarian plan of faith. We feel, then, little occasion to rebut a reproach which is founded on the characteristics of whatever is best in the Church or literature of the country, and which, going beyond and higher than that, identifies itself with whatever is most pure and generous in Christianity itself. But latitudinarianism, says the bishop, tends to "indifference," to "generalism" —a new *ism* in the country—an extraordinary description of something which is to be held in aversion, and to be shunned as a moral evil; one would rather have supposed that

particularism should have been assailed than generalism. However, he says that latitudinarianism leads to "indifference," to "generalism," and to "infidelity." Now, in speculating upon tendencies, it is always very convenient to have the tendency actually existing in practice, in order to correct the deduction of our own minds by the evidence of fact. It becomes no man to declaim against the tendency of a thing to produce such and such result, when it has been in the world a considerable time, and has not produced such result, nor any thing like it. What more common than for children of different denominations to be mixed together in the same school? In a considerable number of private schools there is provision for children attending different places of worship on Sundays, when parents are strict in their adhesion to this or that sect; and I am not aware that this has tended to produce infidelity to any extent—I am not aware of any instance in which infidelity can be traced to this as its cause. Now, besides private schools, there is one in London that used to be connected—I am not sure that it is now—with Worship-Street Chapel, which school was supported by five congregations of different denominations; and this went on for several generations without ever, that I know of, turning out a single infidel in consequence of this diversified combination in its institution. I do not mean to deny that there is infidelity in the country. By no means; I think there is a great deal of it. I think that we may trace even in the literature of the country, and in other indications of the minds of the most highly educated, that they make little more than a formal recognition of the truth of Christianity—that they are not imbued with any thing like a religious spirit, or the spirit of Christianity; there is a thin guise spread over what they say of it—just such a homage as Voltaire would have paid, and did pay, to the Roman-Catholic Church;—or, perhaps, this is sometimes veiled under a thicker cloak of a more hypocritical character; and there is a personal disregard of what marks the Christian, by the attempt to impose Sabbatarian or other restrictions upon the people at large, in order to do what is called keep them in order. This is one of the indications of infidelity in opinion. And, in practice, what more marks the difference between the infidel and the Christian than the employment of falsehood in the way

in which I have just described it as being generally employed for the purpose of impressing other minds? or what is more distinguishing between the Christian and the unbeliever than the practice of duelling, in which no man can engage without making a distinct forfeiture of his Christianity? But where do we find all this infidelity? How do we trace it to latitudinarian schools? Why, this belongs to the higher classes exclusively—it belongs to those classes that have received the benefit of education conducted under the strictest episcopal control and attention, who have been trained in a way which the Church directs, which the Church praises, and which the Church regards as so wise, that it excludes all Dissenters from any share in the benefits thereof. Truly, if such be the result, not of latitudinarian schools, but of exclusive schools—if such be the result of the universities and seminaries of instruction, which are the very antipodes of the system at which the bishop levels his anathema—we may well come to his own conclusion, and say that, unless this can be mended, it would be quite as well if the Church were not allied with the State. Oh, if there be a place in this world where human beings should be allowed to meet without having the brand of sectarianism upon their foreheads, it surely should be the schoolroom: there, at least, their feelings and minds should be allowed to germinate without the twisting and torturing that may be afterwards given them by those who spend their lives in a state of hostility to others for thinking differently from themselves in matters of theology. If there be a place on the earth into which a beam of pure light and love should emanate from the heavens, it should be amongst those of whom Christ said, "Of such is the kingdom of heaven." There let them congregate undividedly—there let them know, and let them rightly estimate, one another—let little children love one another without distinction of sect and party. This, surely, is one of the simplest kinds of homage that we could possibly render to what we recognise as our national religion.

The bishop proceeds with another objection: "Then, as to the reading of the scriptures, it was of the deepest importance that the authorised translation should in no way be shaken in the reverence in which it was held by the country at large. Was it, therefore, right to allow the

Roman-Catholic version of the scriptures to be used? If the Roman-Catholic version was to be admitted, why not the Socinian, or any other version? What could be the consequence of this, but the subversion of those feelings of reverence which it was their (the bishops') bounden duty to inspire in the minds of the youth intrusted to their care?"

I expressed, about three weeks ago, at some length—it was the subject of an entire lecture—my notion of the proper use of the Bible in schools—of the impropriety of employing it merely for the citation of texts in order to fix theological dogmas in the minds of the young—of the impropriety of referring indiscriminately to its preceptive authority—of the impropriety of using it as a book for those common purposes for which other books may serve, or of deadening the mind, by a premature familiarity, to a sense of its many and striking beauties—and of the desirableness of making it very much a spontaneous affair with the child how he should give his attention to it, or of a teacher's exercising a wise discrimination so as to suit the portions which he may bring under a child's view to that child's mental and moral constitution, and thus gradually to lead its interest onwards from the simplest tales and parables to the most majestic conceptions of the poetry or the moral philosophy of the scriptures. I shall therefore not go at all into this part of the subject now; and, indeed, it is not so much to the scriptures themselves that the bishop refers, as to the authorised version. It is not the spirit of the original, but the words of the translation, to which he commands and would enforce a reverence that he fears would be shaken if any other version were known by children even to exist: for no one ever has proposed or thought of proposing that the Roman-Catholic version or any other version should be enforced on the children of Protestants. There has been no hint of such a thing—there has been no proposition of their being used in common. The only power that is to shake the Protestant child's veneration for the Protestant version is his knowledge that the Catholic child reads in some other version. The common version, the authorised version, of the scriptures is known to all educated persons to be tainted by one or two exposed interpolations and a few gross party mistranslations. The authorised version is also known to most persons of education to have exceptions

from its general merit in the way in which particular books are rendered, especially the more poetical compositions. Bishop Lowth's translation of Isaiah, though not unsusceptible of amendment, yet should always be substituted for that which we find in the common Bibles. He and many others having the like episcopal authority have made similar concessions by undertaking the translation of particular books. But while this is the case with most persons of education, there is another result which education also promises, and that is to enforce a just and becoming reverence for the common translation—a reverence for it as couched in the language of antique simplicity, that is of itself a gratification for the reader—a reverence for it as a work of great care and pains and general fidelity—a reverence for it for the sake of the pure old English language, of the purest age and the most nervous character—and also a reverence for it as having connected with its phraseology associations in our own minds from early life, associations that have been gathering in the country from generation to generation, and that show themselves in the writings which our country has produced, those which are most worthy of being the subject of diligent and daily study—and therefore a reverence which cannot by possibility be eradicated from a well-educated mind. All this accumulation of feeling gathers around, and rightfully and necessarily gathers around, the common version of the Old and New Testaments: education does but develop and cherish it; time does but confirm it; and the comparison of other versions, generally speaking, only tends to its illustration. What fear, then, of want of reverence for the common version? It is in a state to command the reverence to which it is entitled; and to educate the country, to whatever extent that education might be carried, would only serve of itself to widen and deepen the reverence, and make it a more efficient principle. This, then, may be relied upon for all the reverence which is just—the reverence which is founded on truth—the reverence which tends to good. I fear that the bishop wants something more than this—something more than is just, something more than is founded on truth, something more than tends to good: a superstitious regard, which is to be kept up as if the translation were an inspired original—a superstitious

regard, which is to cling to mistranslation or interpolation, as if they were essential portions of the word of Christ or the word of God—a superstitious veneration, that is to attach some charm, some mystical power, to the mere words of the translation, as if the soul's health or salvation would be endangered by a departure from them, even though it should be to the more distinct comprehension of the sense of the original. No such reverence as this ought to be any part of a plan of national education. It is a reverence which can only coexist with ignorance, or which, when it steps over the bounds of that, advances into those of conventionalism and hypocrisy. What harm can it do the Protestant child to know that his Roman-Catholic schoolfellow reads from another version, which the taste of an educated boy would on comparison find to be inferior to his own? what harm even if a more distinct conception of the original be darted into his mind by the comparison of the inferior version? and if it were the production of an archbishop of the English and Irish Church, Archbishop Newcome—which the bishop calls the Socinian version—what could it harm him, even if he were to consult this, with all its feebleness and its inferiority to the sound, strong English of the common translation?—what would it harm him if he were to know there is such a book as this, and were to glean from it some truths which are to be found there concerning the original text and the corruption to which it has been subjected? One can see nothing but good in this, and no hostility to any species of religion whatever, unless to the devotion—too much favoured by the bishop—of which ignorance is said to be the mother.

I now come to the last of this catalogue of episcopal objections to national education, for such they really are: "Another result of the State attempting to give instruction in this way would be, that while children found in all other branches of knowledge a uniform course of instruction, which they must go through whether they would or no, in religion alone they would find that they might receive instruction or not as they pleased. It was impossible, when that was the case, that they could attach as much importance to religion as to other branches of instruction. It was supposed, indeed, that a kind of general religious instruction could be given which did not trench

on peculiar tenets; but religious instruction, which was not peculiar, and grounded on the interpretation of the scriptures, did not deserve the name."

I will not now go into the consideration, although it might be rather an inviting topic, of this curious estimate of the worth of compulsion. The Bishop of London seems to think compulsion must needs impress the child with a high sense of that to which it is compelled—that there is no good in education like that which is driven into it by main force: in short, it seems a relic of the old notion that no Greek or Latin was ever worth any thing to a youth, unless it were well whipped into him. There may be reasoners of a class who think that children would rather take to that instruction which is divested of the character of compulsion—that the conscious freedom of their own minds would throw them open to its attractiveness—and that there is a possibility of drawing as well as of driving the human soul to what really constitutes its noblest exercise. However, established churches have always had a *penchant* for compulsion; and what I have to remark here is, that no religion is thought valuable by the Bishop of London until it comes under the form of peculiarity—until it is associated with a peculiar interpretation of scripture. All the rest belongs to that horrible sin of "generalism" which he had previously stigmatised. Now, I believe, could any man be found so independent of all forms and modifications of Christianity as to look at it with an impartial and philosophic eye, he would assuredly pronounce that the best parts of religion are those which are free from this sectarian peculiarity—that the best parts are its general principles—that whatever is purest, highest, grandest in Christianity, is general and not particular; and that this is the case with religion itself, that its spirit is as diffusive as the great Spirit who is its object. But a child may have all the spirit of the religious books of Judaism and Christianity instilled into him—he may become thoroughly imbued with it—he may have religion in a sense in which religion would have been recognised by the patriarchs, by the prophets, and by the apostles—and yet the bishop tells us that it is all vanity unless it be brought to a particular interpretation, meaning the interpretation which is embodied in the forms of the Established Church.

The child may look to the starry heavens at night, and say, "When I consider the heavens, the work of thy fingers; the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained: Lord, what is man that thou art mindful of him?"—"How excellent is thy name, O Lord, in all the earth!"—the child may know the "Lord as his shepherd," and feel assured that he "shall not want"—the child may be in spirit like those who received the blessing of the Saviour, may shed tears of interest and of pity at the tale of the Prodigal Son or of the Good Samaritan, may join its voice in the cry of Hosanna on the waving of palms and the triumphant entry of the Prophet into the metropolitan city of the nation that he was attempting to reform—the child may be agonised with the horrors of Calvary, and feel its heart throb with emotion as the apostle asks the dignitaries of the land, "Whether it be right to obey man rather than God, judge ye"—it may contemplate the lilies of the field, and see how they grow; and watch the flying sparrow, and feel that it falls not to the ground without a heavenly knowledge taking cognisance of the event,—and yet all this the bishop would say constitutes no religion, all this is "latitudinarianism" and "generalism," and leaves the child destitute of that which he and the rulers of the Church hold it their sacred duty to combine so essentially with national education. I take it that such an attack—such an objection as this—shows the objector to be ignorant alike of what constitutes education and of what constitutes religion.

I have now only two or three miscellaneous remarks to make. The bishop says, "Such a system would be the heaviest blow that had been struck at the religion of this country for many years." If so, the religion of this country must be a remarkably tender and fragile object; for this is a blow that can hurt nothing that is strong in truth, nothing that is rooted in utility. He insidiously represents the course which is taken as an attempt to force education: "He thought that the rulers of the Church of England ought to stand forward on this occasion, and protest against all attempts to force upon this country, as a national system of education, any system whatever not connected with the Established Church." This notion of compulsion is one of the standing fallacies in regard to education, and it is a fallacy which unfortunately prevails to a

considerable extent. People cry out, as soon as they hear of national education, "Oh, children are to be drummed and flogged to school as they are in Prussia:" the fact being, that in Prussia no parent is obliged to send his child to school if he has the child educated at home, and if evidence is given that the child is educated; and, so far as this goes, it is the compulsion on the parent of not turning out the child to the world unfit to be a member of society, incapable of discharging his duties and enjoying his rights. Why, this comes under that compulsion by which we would restrain offences against liberty and property, and belongs to that class. No child ought to be left uneducated. The choice of doing it himself or having it done by the State is all, I think, that parental right can claim with even the least show of reason: and to give to parental authority the power of destroying the soul of a child, as ignorance does destroy it, and as the prejudices and vices that ignorance lets in destroy it, is altogether as bad as the ancient system that allowed the parent the power of life and death over his child.

The bishop speaks of this system as an attempt, "if not to lower the Church, to raise Dissent to a level with it;" and therefore he protests against it as degradation. Now, I thought this was one of the species of levelling generally allowed to be honourable and desirable. Attempts to level, by pulling the high down to the condition of the low, may be protested against with some show of reason: but to attempt to raise the low without depriving the high of their possessions—this is what all philanthropists should rejoice in, this is what every Christian should profess earnestly to desire—this can only be objected to by that envious and vain-glorious disposition which sees its own degradation in the elevation of another, and which can set no store by a good when its neighbour also comes into the enjoyment of that good. That Dissent is raised, deprives the Church of no emolument, takes from it no honour: it simply recognises that there are such people in the country as Dissenters, and that they have the common rights of members of the nation to share in that which is national. He threatens that if this latitudinarian plan should be persisted in, the "tables of their lordships' house, and of the other house of Parliament, would be loaded with pe-

titions from all classes of the community interested in the question, praying them not to withdraw the instruction of the people, or pecuniary assistance, from the National Society, which gave religious education to the poor according to the principles of the Established Church." He adds afterwards: "They had no reason to dread a competition based upon the principle that assistance should be afforded in proportion to the extent of their own exertions."

Now, here is one of those gross fallacies which so frequently pass current in this country, by the misapplication of reasoning, adapted to one topic, to the establishment of another. The grant, of the withdrawal of which he complains, and for the restoration of which he threatens that the tables of both houses of Parliament should be loaded with petitions,—knowing well enough the machinery by which those loads of petitions could be brought into parchmentary existence,—was founded upon this system—that the public money was given in proportion as schools were subscribed for; so that whichever parties chose to make a sacrifice of wealth for the endowment of schools, received most of the public money—that is to say, it always went where it was least wanted, to the richest neighbourhoods; and in poor places, where but few were interested in education, and where it generally happened that they were Dissenters also—where they had been making the most continuous exertions before the Church dreamt of interfering with education at all—but where, in addition to this, they could not raise a large amount of subscriptions to build a school—they were deprived of the grant, or a mere niggardly pittance was put down, not in proportion to the wants but in proportion to the wealth of a place, not in proportion to the evidence of want but to the evidence that there was no want: it was a bounty on sectarian wealth at the expense of national instruction. Leaving these petitions to be treated as they may be when elaborated and manufactured, the gist of this threat is, that the Church of England will consent to no system of national instruction that is not conducted according to the creeds and forms of the Establishment, and under the control of its clerical and episcopal authorities. Now, I do not mean at all to moot the question of the Established Church; but this is not the way in which the subject of education identifies itself with the national Church. I think the subjects

should be identified; I think that a national Establishment and national education should be one and the same, not by the enforcement of a creed, not by the control of the clergy, but by the national Establishment, by the national clergy, actually doing the work; and, if they cannot or will not do it, making room for those who can and will, for the remuneration which the reserved tenth of the produce of the land offers for that purpose. Let them become the real instructors of the people—their instructors in general science—their instructors in literature and history, and in morality and religion as diffused through and connected with these, but with no sectarian taint upon them; and then they will deserve the incomes derived from that reserved tenth which is really designed for the spiritual culture of the entire community, and which, I trust, will be preserved intact until it can be applied to that purpose. When no longer absorbed by a monopolising sect—no longer connected with the imposition of creeds and articles—no longer confined to the payment of pulpit instructions that have to a large extent ceased to deserve the name—but when rendered truly subservient to education among all classes, it will indeed present something deserving the name of a national Establishment, of a Church of Christ, saying, "Suffer the little ones to come unto me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of heaven." And, meanwhile, let inquiry proceed, let discussion rise upon discussion to elucidate the great topic, and to conduct us more safely towards the result which we desire—that result so much in accordance with human nature. Placed on this earth by the same Power that nurtures and cherishes the earth itself—that trains the flexile convolvulus and the stately oak—that bids every succeeding spring put forth its flowers, and that rears in the autumn the ripening harvest—man, if left to himself in God's schools for all, if unperverted by the errors of social institutions, or by the interference of priests, with their nails and hammers and trellis-work, and all the machinery of perverted art to spoil the beauty and expansiveness that God and nature give—man will advance to the full maturity and development of his powers, and to the ample capacity of his enjoyments, and will show his nature in a loveliness and a grandeur which, when the eye seeth, it shall bear witness to, and when the ear heareth, it shall bless.

CHRIST A NATIONAL REFORMER.

May 12th, 1839.

The fact that Jesus Christ contemplated the national reformation of Judæa, is very obvious on inspection of any of the four biographical accounts of him which we have in the gospels. At the same time, it is a fact which has been remarkably neglected in the modern teachings of Christianity. It is an object which might have been expected. The Jewish people were always conspicuous for their nationality. Christ, like the prophets who preceded him, was a patriot and a reformer; he felt himself linked, in the first instance, with those who were his brethren in the flesh; and for a long time Christian instruction was exclusively directed to the Jewish people. He probably numbered amongst his ancestors the author of that fervid composition — which is evidently by error ascribed to David—in which the attachment of the Jewish people for their state and polity and their metropolis was declared, when it was said, "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning; let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth, if I prefer not Jerusalem above other earthly joys." And it was in the spirit of this passage—when his own feelings were excited, when he contemplated in reality that Jerusalem which the writer of the psalm only beheld in imagination, when he realised as pending over it a more dreadful destruction than that which had swept its inhabitants into the land of their captivity—that he said, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" So strong was this spirit in his disciples, that when the storm

was bursting over their cherished city—with a feeling like that which led the Pilgrim Fathers, in their banishment from this country to the remote wildernesses in the New World, there to preserve the names with which they were familiar, and to revere them in that land of their asylum and their hopes—with a feeling like this, the followers of Christ transferred the name of Jerusalem to the future condition, even the immortal condition of the blessed which they anticipated; when there was no longer a Jerusalem on earth as the centre of their attachment, they realised a New Jerusalem in heaven—showing the yearnings of country and of race strong even in the prospect of that dissolution which severs other ties, and beaming afar into that eternity into which time resolves its interests and its affections. We might reasonably have expected, therefore, what we find to be the fact, that Christ regarded not merely individuals—individual instruction, individual repentance and reformation, individual hope and progress—but that he had a continual view to the amelioration of the national character of his country, to its regeneration, to making the race of Abraham fulfil that high mission which appeared to have been intrusted to them by Providence. But he did not set about this by any attempts to shake off the Roman yoke, or to erect a new authority that should supersede that of Moses. The only means he employed were those of teaching—the only means—and what means are more powerful? The lessons of morality and of religion have often survived the wreck of empires—they germinate and bring forth fruit when the conqueror has been spreading desolation over the material face of the country—they survive like the simple productions of nature that renew themselves from year to year, the flowers that blossom with every returning spring, eternal in their recurring fertility—they renew themselves when institutions pass away, when laws and arrangements, that seemed firm as the proudest tower or temple that men have erected, are rased to their very foundation, are obliterated from the face of the earth. Teaching is more powerful than the enactments of legislatures or the conquests of warriors; it survives them both, and it often struggles—and successfully struggles—with both, even in all their pride and their success. This truth has been undisputed—the effect of a country's literature in fashioning its

mind and manners and morals, casting them into some peculiar shape; in training individuals by thousands and millions to the realisation of different dispositions and modes of action in reference to some of their recognised institutions—this has always been acknowledged; and it was with a strong conviction of this fact, that Fletcher of Saltoun declared that who would might make the laws of a people, if he wrote their songs. Even the lightest and slightest modes in which feeling can be expressed, in which sympathy can be excited, in which the tendencies and thoughts and emotions of the human soul can be transmitted as by the electricity of intellect from one to another —even the lightest and slightest of these may compete with all the paraphernalia of government, with all the apparatus of conquest. The teaching which Christ adopted is in itself inherently the most powerful of all, and one which eventually will be sure to assert its power against whatever shadow of strength may be realised in more arbitrary ways.

Nor was there any incompatibility between the known individuality of Christ's teaching and his having the object of the national reformation of the Jews in view. Man's individuality is his noblest heritage. It is a greater thing for him that he is a man, than that he is Jew or Gentile, European or Asiatic—it is more for his dignity and worth that he is rational and immortal, than it can be that he is social and political: and in the ministering of that which conduces to the progress of his individuality, which trains and builds him up on the basis of truth, and fashions him to all good,—in this there are, perhaps, the means that most powerfully act upon national existence and national character,—there is a perfect harmony between the objects; and though it is man's highest condition that he is rational and immortal, yet the social, the political, is a grand phase of the human character—it is one which can never be safely neglected, it is one into which the highest tendencies of his nature are continually branching out, and in which they realise some of their best results.

Those much mistake the teaching of Christ, and the example of Christ, and the spirit of his religion, who think that they are following any or all of these by endeavouring to alienate men from those social duties which belong to

them in their civic capacity. The anti-political Christian teachers of the present day are so far unchristian or anti-christian teachers—they most widely depart from Christ when they imagine that they most closely adhere to him. The questions which he mooted amongst his countrymen related to their laws and polity, and national covenant, as well as to the condition of their own minds apart from these—he ever had them in view—he ostensibly showed himself as an authorised reformer when he made his triumphant entrance into the temple of Jerusalem, and cleansed it, for a while, of its pollutions. Nor is there any possibility but that the moral questions of one age, however non-political they may be, should become the political questions of another age; the difference is only in the various proportions in which questions occupy men's attention, and in the different tendencies of different times rendering one more important for the moment than another. It seems to us, for instance, that the question of slavery is one of the simplest and one of the most exclusively moral questions. To solve it, we fly at once to a text or to a moral principle, and are satisfied with the clear and conclusive decision. A good deal of cheap philanthropy is put forth on a question about which there happens only to be this species of interest here, because such a kind of misnamed "property" does not exist amongst us. Cross the Atlantic, and this exclusively simple and moral question becomes a political question, a social question—involving charters and constitutions—involving the interests of classes and of individuals, and the rights of particular states; it becomes a question so political that those who take the ground so often taken here, of avoiding political subjects in moral and religious teachings, avoid the question of slavery there. In the great majority of pulpits in the United States—in 99 out of 100—we may, perhaps, say in 999 out of 1000—the question of negro slavery is proscribed from Sabbath to Sabbath, all the year round. It is never heard of; if the preacher were to mention it, there would be an outcry against him of meddling with politics in the pulpit, and bringing party discussions into that scene where all ought to be consecrated simply to what belongs to morality —to which they apprehend this does not belong. In a few instances, where the topic is adverted to, it is for the purpose

of reminding the slaves that they are bound to obey their masters, that such is the will of the Lord, and that they are bound to believe that marriage itself may be dissolved by the auction of the slave-market. Churches are supported by properties of which the holding of slaves is a portion; and the blacks and whites in the free states are only allowed when separated from one another to commemorate the death of Him who died for all, and to hear that God hath made of one blood all nations of men to dwell on the face of the earth.

Now, this is the legitimate result, this is the fair extent, to which the proscription of politics from the pulpit should go, if it be allowed to operate. If there is nothing political in Christianity—if the progress of Christ through the towns and villages of Judæa was simply to teach matters which were unconnected with the state, and with the duties of individuals as related to the state—why, then, the preachers of America are right in this matter, and the preachers of Great Britain are wrong, when they meddle with such a question as that of slavery, or if they meddle with a matter of an analogous description about which there is really a strong and lively interest in our own country. We cannot separate man as an individual from man as connected with his fellow-beings,—as forming one with them in social arrangements, which, if his character act upon them, react in turn upon his character—which make him lofty or mean, generous or narrow, gross or pure; for between the individual and the society of which he forms a part, there is a constant action and reaction going on: and if, as has frequently of late years been said,—if the best mode of the reformation of a state be that in which each individual reforms himself, assuredly, on the other hand, there can be no more efficient machinery put in motion towards the reformation of the individual than that which achieves the regeneration of a community.

But Christ did not, as I said, contemplate the erection of another polity like that of Moses, nor the reconstruction of that polity, nor the shaking off of the Roman yoke, whether by action, by passive resistance, or in any other way. His course of proceeding was fashioned upon the condition, the peculiar condition, of the Jews at that time; and there is one particular in which that condition remarkably differs

from our own, namely, as to the elements of society which are generally distinguished by the appellation of Church and State. In Judæa, the State grew out of the Church: in this country, the Church grows out of the State. The Jews' primary forms and elements of social being were theological; they were political, in the modern sense of the word, only secondarily: whilst, with us, the reverse obtains. With them, the high-priest made kings: with us, kings make high-priests. With them, theological power was so strong and promnient, that it could avail, and did avail repeatedly, to change the form of polity, making the nation now monarchical, and now republican: with us, the state power is so paramount that it may avail, and ofttimes has availed, to change the profession of religion, to set up one mode of faith and worship, and to pull down another mode of faith and worship. With them, their laws were part and parcel of the Bible: with us, the Bible is represented as part and parcel of the law. Every thing indicated with them that religion was paramount: every thing indicates with us that religion is subordinate. With them, theology was first, politics were second: with us, politics are first, and theology is second. And this contrast between the condition of things then and now necessarily made much religious then that is political now, and makes much religious now that was political then.

It is with reference to this diversity that we should understand the proceedings of Christ, the spirit of his teachings, and the purpose which he contemplated in those teachings. His objects were not, as I said, to reconstruct a polity, or to raise a province into an independent state; but they were to realise that which the Jews, in their corruptions, had lost sight of. The Jewish people were held together, not as the nations of Europe are in modern times, but they were held together by the tie of natural affinity, of race; they were the descendants of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob; they gloried in their common parentage and in their pure Hebrew blood. He followed out this principle, and endeavoured to realise in them a moral affiliation upon the patriarchs of whom they boasted, and to revive in them the faith and truth by which Abraham had been distinguished in his stern adhesion to the dictates of conscience, and his readiness to bear solitary testimony to it in the face

of an opposing world. They gloried as a nation in their heritage of the oracles of God, in their possession of the scriptures, to which they continually appealed, and in which they found the outlines of their constitution and the precepts of their duty. He endeavoured to clear the meaning of those scriptures from the glosses which their commentators had piled upon them, until they had almost extinguished all sense and meaning, to imbue them with the spirit of those scriptures, and to make what had been a mere dead letter, a living word, ruling as well as enlightening their souls. They were proud of technical privileges; they were a separated people; they boasted of being the people of God, while they regarded all others as dogs of Gentiles; they claimed supremacy; they supposed a peculiar partiality in Providence for them, and a guardianship over them, and a covenant for their exaltation. He endeavoured to exalt them, not by technical privileges, but by moral worth, and to form amongst them men who should go forth as teachers of the nations in morality.

It may be said that this object at first failed, and it does seem so on the first appearance; but if we look more intently, I think we shall perceive that, so far from its being a failure, the success was eventually the most splendid that could be accomplished. The people rejected him, and he was crucified; but there were those amongst them who imbibed the spirit and power of his teaching, who became themselves teachers, who spread to such an extent amongst the Jews, that they were able to survive the destruction of their nation and of their polity; who carried his gospel of glad tidings to all people; who produced an effect upon the earth which is at this moment perceptible in the thoughts of all who think and in the actions of all who act.

In looking at the mode in which he accomplished this purpose, one of the first illustrations that occur to us is that of the Sermon on the Mount, in which he, as it were, opened his commission and declared the great principles of his teaching. If we analyse that sermon, it appears divisible into five portions; the first of which—containing what are called the Beatitudes, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven," and so on—is an attack on the current errors as to what constituted human happiness: he resolves it into elements different from those of which it

was supposed to be formed by the great majority of his countrymen—he traces it to dispositions of meekness and peaceableness, to earnest desires after righteousness, mercy, purity of heart, and to a readiness to endure opposition and persecution. He lays down, in the commencement of this discourse, the frame of mind and character which, in his view, would be the enduring basis of human happiness.

The second portion of the Sermon on the Mount is an appeal from the letter to the spirit of their ancient laws, precepts, and institutions; he denounces the common mode of resting in the literal observance of these things—of only doing so much, in obedience to a divine commandment, as would give the external appearance of conformity therewith. His own philosophy goes deeper than this: it goes to the thoughts of the heart, it goes to the inward desires and purposes; and here, and here alone, he declares true obedience or disobedience to be found and to be appreciated.

The third portion of it is an exaltation of reality above appearance, a demolition of the morality of appearances, and the substitution of the worth of that which exists within, and which approves its reality to human consciousness. He tells them not to make their fastings obvious to their fellow-creatures, not to make long prayers in public, not to bestow their charity ostentatiously, but to realise the disposition to be what others were striving only to seem to be, and in that reality to find the truth of their own worth and happiness.

The fourth portion of the Sermon on the Mount eulogises the passive as distinguished from the active virtues, the conquering of evil by good, the endurance of kindness, the firmness which, though it never has recourse to violence, yet never is beaten down by violence; which pursues its way, defying opposition—not by an antagonistic opposition, but by that patience and gentleness which, secure in itself against being turned aside from its own purpose, can afford to be kind and benignant towards others, descending like the sunshine and the rain on the good and the evil, on the just and the unjust,—but still shining, still descending, and fertilising the earth: and he concludes the Sermon on the Mount by a strong metaphorical description of the worth of character —not of character as appreciated by others, but of character as accomplished and built up by the individual—representing

this as the one thing essential, as being far above all external or ceremonial obedience, all lip homage, as being that edifice founded on a rock, which would beat back the torrent and the storm.

In these particulars, no doubt, Christ had distinct and immediate reference to the prevalent mistakes of the Jewish people; but they were not merely Jewish errors—they are the mistakes of human nature—mistakes repeated in the world from generation to generation—mistakes which preserve their identity of spirit when they are most dissimilar as to the external objects to which they may relate—mistakes which vary in proportion, indeed; which sometimes are established and consecrated by institutions, at other times only existing in defiance of those institutions; and which, where institutions and opinions are not harmonious between themselves, have the further result of inducing that conventionalism which renders the whole framework of society so feeble and hollow. But still they are permanent sources of evil, whose results continually reappear, and which, whether they reappear in what is called a religious form or in what is called a political form, must, if we adhere to the spirit of Christ, be opposed as he opposed them, and call forth our endeavours at reformation as they called forth his endeavours. The spirit which detected them in his day in Judæa would, no doubt, detect much at this time in our own country to be dealt with in a similar manner, as to the truths by which darkness should be dispelled; in a different mode, as to the particular external actions which would form the machinery for an analogous reformation. Were that spirit now to declare the results of its observation of our own country, would it not expose and put to shame the false feudalism of modern society, the vanity of station, the ingrained aristocracy of England, felt at the core of all classes, and operating from the lowest to the highest; and leading all to place human good in something external, something worthless but as a sign or symbol, something that is separated from the reality that it once denoted, and which flits over the earth like a shadow of the past, but still a shadow that darkens the substance of present good? Would not the same voice of reproof and reformation be uplifted in the presence of those vanities for which so many strive in their eager desire for the show of

wealth, and for the privilege and pomp of station after which they are striving as the one good thing of this world, and to which, by implication, they sacrifice the good to be achieved in another world? and would it not say to them, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal. Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: and yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these"? Were that spirit now to declare the results of its observations of society, would it not in like manner reprove and rebuke the dogmatic sectarianism of our day, the disposition of theology to split hairs and torture texts, and raise creeds and ceremonies into the banners of party, and to make ever and anon fresh demarcations between those who appeal to the same authority and profess to be going the same course, and who yet are fostering bigotries and antipathies in the name of the Prince of Peace and of the God of love? would it not repeat to them the mild and gentle precept that warned the Jews of old against their antagonism? would it not tell them not to take their stand pragmatically on such speculations as these, and to judge not lest they should be judged, to condemn not lest they should be condemned? would it not pursue the heart of falsehood in the conventional estimates of good and worth and morality which now abound? would it not rebuke those who, instead of analysing the character and tendency of an action, are only asking what this or that person would think of it, and shaping their course accordingly,—not in the truth of their own thoughts, nor even in the truth of the thoughts of others, but in the shadow of a shade, the notion which others entertain of the feelings which others may have,—and so evaporating all the integrity and all the reality of individual life? would it not beat down the pride of opinion, the desire of opinion, the glory of opinion, as the great thing, and say, "Blessed are ye when men shall despise you, and hate you, and persecute you; for thus was it they did with the prophets before you"?

Were Christ thus to walk our streets as he did those of the cities and towns of Judæa—were he to rebuke and to exhort in the same spirit and with the same distinct refer-

ence to existing things, disregarding what had become obsolete, or merely a matter of historic record—what would be the result? Some would be for sending him to gaol on suspicion of being a Jacobin or a Chartist, and some for sending him to an asylum on suspicion of being a madman; the police would apprehend him, and the magistrates fine him every week for Sabbath-breaking; the fashionable would not deem him presentable, and the evangelical would be sure to suspect his orthodoxy; some would think he inculcated enthusiastic notions, and others that he held anti-property doctrines; some would deem him a sceptic, and some would call him a mystic;—and although in these times, and with our present progress in civilisation, he might escape crucifixion, yet he would have to sustain the weight of that cross which truth is ever doomed to bear, and on which truth redeems and rules the world.

WHIT-SUNDAY.

May 19th, 1839.

In announcing, last Sunday, that I should continue this morning the subject to which your attention was then directed, it did not occur to me that to-day is Whit-Sunday, a Christian commemoration which I have generally been allowed to turn to account in my choice of a topic. It is one, indeed, which may be said to have peculiar claims for this purpose, as it was the real birth-day of apostolic Christianity—the day when the one hundred and twenty disciples of Christ, after their Master was parted from them, associated themselves together and commenced those works and sufferings by which their religion was eventually to be established in the world. The subject allies itself to that which was discussed last Sunday morning, inasmuch as the apostles, as they commenced their labours on the day of Pentecost, followed up their Master's work: his spirit was upon them, and his plans and objects were pursued by them at the sacrifice of all peace and quietness and rest—at the sacrifice of all interest and of the common ties of mankind—at the sacrifice, ultimately, in many cases, of life itself.

In commencing, last Sunday, the exposition of some of the teachings of Christ, considered as tending towards a national reformation of the Jews, I pointed out the mode in which he endeavoured to effect his purpose, employing for it only teaching—teaching, which has ever been found one of the most powerful means by which man can act upon man, whose victories endure when those of warriors pass away, and whose results are found still growing and flourishing in the world like the flowers which return every spring-time, when institutions have moul-

dered and decayed like the towers and temples of ancient days — teaching, which, accomplishing its objects for a people, accomplishes them for the individual also ; and, whilst it realises certain results in this world, prepares man best to enter on his heritage of immortality.

I selected the Sermon on the Mount as a specimen of the mode in which his teachings were directed to this purpose, showing how he endeavoured to correct the common errors in the estimate of human happiness, and to resolve it into other elements than those which general opinion considered as making up its sum and substance—how he led his countrymen from the letter of the Mosaic law to its spirit, following out the natural meaning of the precepts, and showing that the external observance of them did little or nothing unless exercised as moral principle ; I pointed out how he vindicated the real at the expense of the apparent, and, putting down ostentatious modes of worship and of almsgiving, inculcated those inward feelings of which only the individual and his God may be conscious, but with which feelings the reality of his moral being, and that which constitutes his happiness or his suffering, are essentially connected. We find him elevating character as the great essential, throwing aside in comparison with it all forms and observances, all professions of religious worship or dogma, and making this the rock on which man should build his house so that it may stand when the winds blow and when the torrents beat. We have now to mark the apostles pursuing a similar course. They were met together, that small body—we are told the number of them was but one hundred and twenty, including the women — they were assembled together in Jerusalem, when the impulse from on high came upon them, and sent them forth on the great work to which their days were devoted ; and we may observe of them that, although their Master was taken up into heaven, their attention was directed to things of the earth, things that belong to this world, and that are most intimately associated with its condition and with its prospects.

About the literal fact of the ascension there is considerable difficulty : it is only described by Luke, who was avowedly not a personal witness. But there is no difficulty about the fact that Christ was placed at the

right hand of the Majesty on high, in the heaven of power, where he judged and punished the Jewish people—where he showed the cross triumphant over the throne of the Cæsars. There is no doubt of the fact that, while he blessed them, he was parted from them; for he was blessing his disciples by word and deed, and by the exhibition of his own pure and spotless character, through the whole course of his earthly ministry. There can be no doubt about the figurative meaning, although there may be about the literal truth, of the Catholic legend of the ascension—of the story that, on the spot where the foot of Christ last pressed the earth, there a temple was erected which no power could cover in with its intended roof—the prints of Christ's footsteps remained upon the earth, the path of his passage upwards to heaven continued open for his followers. Nor can there be any doubt of the wisdom or propriety of the rebuke said to have been administered by the angels to the apostles, "Why stand you here gazing up into heaven?" It is not man's position, it is not man's business on the earth, to be idly gazing up into heaven, but to be about the work which the day requires of him, best serving the purposes of eternity in most efficiently promoting those of time. What occasion there is continually to repeat this rebuke! How soon did it become necessary, as the ascetic and solitary spirit found its way into nominal Christianity! How often might it be said to those who thought to save their souls by retiring from society, by immuring themselves within cloistered walls, by spending days in the repetition of prayers, or in what they fancied to be divine meditation,—so alienating themselves from all the ties and usefulness of social life! How often might it be said to them, "Why stand you here gazing up into heaven? what thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might"! They neglected this; they went on in their course of useless contemplation; and the result at last was that, looking up into heaven, their feet became entangled in quagmires of all sorts of abominations, till their system was swept away from the face of the earth. It might be addressed to men of modern times, who think there is something in religion that alienates them from the world—who place it altogether in their experience of a certain round of emotions, or in the repetition of a certain class of forms—and who are

so absorbed in these, that they neglect to build their household into that home temple of happiness which it might be made, that they neglect to spread abroad that kind feeling which might be so disseminated as to make men helpers to one another, instead of fierce competitors; who allow their religion to call them off from matters that belong to their position and their rights and their duties as members of a great community,—flattering themselves that, as they have here no continuing city, they have here no obligatory citizenship,—and thus separating the influences which should intermingle, and refine, and elevate, and expand one another, until they produce what they conceive to be the perfect Christian character: of them we say, "Why stand you gazing up into heaven? look around in the light of heaven upon the things of the earth, and do your duty by them." There are, indeed, religionists so gloomy that the rebuke might be varied, who, in meditating on their own dark dogmas of reprobation, of substitution and satisfaction, of eternal torment and the like, are absorbed from the earth and drawn away from the earth in a different direction, and whose minds become so overcast and clouded with these doctrines, and with the spirit of bigotry which is infused thereby into their hearts, that it is not by heaven that their souls are made alien from the earth and useless upon the earth; but of them we might rather say, "Why stand you here gazing down to hell, when you should be serving humanity?"

The apostles set themselves with hand and heart to the work before them, and the great means which they employed were those of popular appeal. They commenced on the day of Pentecost those remarkable addresses to the people, the outlines of which, with some of their most striking expressions, are preserved to us in Luke's narrative of the Acts of the Apostles. Nicodemus came to Jesus by night, but neither Jesus nor his followers returned the visit: they left it to the priests of later ages to seek the great men of the world by night, to endeavour privately to acquire an influence over those endowed with the power of station or of political authority, and thus to prepare for leading the world into an unreasoning condition of religion —an outward profession of doctrines and forms that sink not into the heart and soul, but which may indicate the state of

those who make their profession. The apostles did all things openly. They appealed to the people in the great assemblies of the people. They neglected, rather than courted, the great,—indeed, they were chiefly confronted with the magnates of the land for the purposes of persecution on the one hand and of resistance on the other. It was with the people that they dealt—it was with the people that they held their conferences, to them that they gave their teachings, and in their minds they endeavoured to stimulate the love of truth. And thus has it ever been with the reforms and improvements that have taken deep root in the world—that have lasted for ages, and have brought forth fruit. Thus it was with the Scotch reformation, and with that of Luther in Germany. Thus it was not with the attempts of the Polish Socinians: they merely created a transitory system which soon faded away—the creed of a few speculative minds, that had no grasp upon the public heart. And the English Church, pursuing a mixed course, employing power as its great stay and support, and political influence as its best means of propagation, created that conventional system which we behold at the present day, where, under religious forms, we find chiefly the spirit of an earthly policy. It is true that the great multitude may not be, cannot be, at all times ready to receive new truth in the full extent of its meaning, in its simplicity, its lustre, and its power; but it is by such public appeals as the apostles made that the truer spirits that exist in the world are singled out, brought forth, and stimulated,—and they love truth all the more, and feel it all the more strongly, when they can breathe it in a free and pure atmosphere. Hence the character of apostolic eloquence, the outline of which is preserved in their discourses,—and most remarkable those discourses are. Their style, according to those whom the apostles addressed,—whether they were appealing to priests and princes, or to an indiscriminate multitude,—and at a later period, as they were addressing themselves to Jews, to proselytes, or to Gentiles,—varied, but was ever simple in all its variety, going straight onwards to the point at which they aimed, telling out the views of their own minds even when their conviction or interpretation of prophecy might not be such as commends itself to the inquiring in later ages, but was still God's truth to them; they held on their

course with an earnestness and a fervour that were highly characteristic, pouring out breathing thoughts and burning words into the public ear, and thus pricking men to the heart until they cried out, "Men and brethren, what shall we do for deliverance?" And while in the world's conflicts, while in battles and sieges, it is by the bow and the arrow and the spear, or in modern times by the volleying artillery, that towns or nations are won or lost, it was by this spiritual warfare, it was by weapons such as the truth, and earnestness, and fervour, and power of popular appeal, that the world of moral and religious conviction was lost and won.

It might have been thought, in a country like our own, that there would have been much resembling those demonstrations on the part of the apostles, and that our institutions and habits would have fostered the like power. This is, however, by no means the case. We have a representative government, public meetings, pleadings in courts of law, and teaching in churches; but in none of these do we find the spirit and power of the apostles of Christ, because the instruction, the pleading, are neither given nor received in a like spirit of simplicity and honest inquiry. We have a representative government; but shrewd men, whatever eloquence may be displayed, calculate beforehand, and almost with unerring accuracy, the way in which votes will be divided. We have public meetings; but people come together rather to hear their own opinions, and to put down by clamour opposition to those opinions, than to engage in any thing like fair controversy or discussion. We have pleading in courts of justice, in which sometimes, indeed, it is the glory of an advocate to bewilder the mind of a jury. And we have teaching in churches, where every body knows beforehand what he is to hear, and where most would be offended if they heard any thing strikingly different from what they anticipated. There can be no power of apostolic eloquence in such a state of things as this. It is superseded and overcome by a hollow conventionalism. The apostles did not act in this merely formal way. When they sometimes met for the discussion of a difficulty, the decision was contingent on the reasoning pursued by the speakers; and when they taught the people and preached the doctrine of Christ, it was not by going

into a prepared building, and pursuing their prepared routine of ceremony before they came to the purpose for which they were assembled; but at the gate of the temple, in the market-place, wherever the multitudes were gathered together, they raised their voice of power—they brought home to the nation the guilt of innocent blood, or they inspired the hope of deliverance; they reasoned, they pleaded, they made the force of their own feelings pass into the bosoms of their auditors; and thus did it happen that thousands were added to their number from day to day.

This little body of Christians was united together in the first instance by a personal discipleship to Christ, which, probably, all of them had enjoyed. There may be disciples made by publications, by writings, or by set discourses. Truth, abstract truth, may thus be conveyed from mind to mind, and spread over a large extent; but this species of discipleship can never have the general fervour, the heartfelt attachment, by which that of the apostles and disciples of Christ was eminently distinguished—their love of Christ, which constrained them, which in them was stronger than bonds, persecution, or death, and by the energy of which they triumphed over the world. This was the result of their personal discipleship, in having the opportunity of marking his character, not merely in prepared forms, or in the comparative stateliness, as it were, of public exhortations, but in the habitual ways of their Master from day to day and from hour to hour, and the mode in which he conducted himself with the people in their crowded meetings, or on the mountain or in the wilderness to which he retired: they had seen how pure, how true, how elevated, and how morally grand he was; and in the perception of those qualities they were bound to him with a bond that not all the powers of the earth could shake or loosen. But when left by themselves, they associated together as a co-operative community—a society in which all were free and equal. That old Church of Jerusalem was the most pure specimen of a spiritual democracy that the world has ever seen. They all met on the same footing, the men and the women, the apostles and those who became discipled through their means. We find they were all engaged in the election of those officers who were to superintend their

temporal concerns, their almsgiving and support of the poor, and so on; in which the apostles exercised no episcopal authority, and took on them no episcopal dignity. And even in the choice of an apostle to supply the place of Judas, in consequence of his treason, we find that they all consulted together—they took a share, not only in the deliberations, but in the decision. We are told that they gave forth their lots when they came to a decision on this matter; and I apprehend we should misunderstand the expression, if by giving forth their lots we supposed it was left to the work of chance, or that there was any chance in the matter. Those lots were most likely symbols of opinion deposited in some urn prepared for their reception: that is, in modern phraseology, it was not an appeal to lot, but the exercise of the ballot; and it is a strange thing that the first Christian Church distinguished itself by two of the political principles of modern days, namely, the universality of their suffrage, and the ballot by which they expressed their suffrage. I do not mention this as having any particular bearing on the political questions of modern times, but as a circumstance that ought to hold in check the tongues of priests and partisans when they are disposed to misapply the scriptures, and to brand as sinful that which is simply an opposition to their own political opinions and particular interests in civic and social matters.

The Church of Jerusalem was not only a free and equal community, but it had a characteristic which is yet more startling in modern times, and which I mention not with reference to the permanency of its adoption; but however that may be, and however undesirable it may be in other circumstances, the fact is undeniable, that the first Christians, this free and equal community, had also very soon the institution of common property. We find that they brought their property into one stock. From that fund their missionaries were supplied, and from that fund the individuals were supported, each continuing his own early vocation, whatever that vocation might be. This has been attempted in modern times, merely on the ground of pecuniary interest,—but on that ground it has never been attempted with success; and it is probably the fact that the constitution of our nature does require some stronger impulse than that of pecuniary interest to enter into such

a system. It was practised amongst the Essenes, a Jewish sect, and a sect of some importance in the time of Christ, and whose institutions were probably the origin of those monkish establishments that afterwards prevailed in Christianity; but in them it was grounded on the principles, as they interpreted them, of the Jewish religion. In monasteries and convents, afterwards, the religious duty of poverty was felt as a strong principle, and this actuated the minds of those who became brethren of the communities of that period. The followers of Rapp, in the United States, are bound together by a superstitious veneration for the person and supposed inspiration of their teacher; and even the St.-Simonians of France, who seemed for a while to aim with some success at this characteristic of the first Christians, employed a sort of religious principle for its enforcement, and connected it with hierarchical views of the structure of society. Without some such principle, there is little reason to suppose it will be realised—at least, not until the perception of pecuniary interest in it can be made more obvious than it has hitherto been to the short-sighted eyes of inquirers. There must be, as there was with the first Christians, a strong community of feeling; and without that community of feeling and object, we can almost as little realise the conception as the existence of a state of common property. We find the striking effect that it produced in the consentaneity of their expressions—in their contemporaneous chant of a thanksgiving when the apostles had been delivered from the persecutions of the Sanhedrim; after the peril in which they had been placed, when they returned to their followers, the whole multitude burst out into a song or chant, in which some voice, of course, led the way, but in which the feeling of all beat so strongly in unison that the identity of expression was not marred. Peter and John "went to their own company, and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said unto them. And when they heard that, they lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and said, Lord, thou art God, which hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is: who by the mouth of thy servant David hast said, Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things? The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord,

and against his Christ. For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, for to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done. And now, Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word, by stretching forth thine hand to heal; and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of thy holy child Jesus. And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together." And well might it shake with the spirit of united determination and of united feeling that was evinced in this chant. A few persons thus leagued together have in them a spirit before which the world is sure eventually to quail.

We remarked, as another characteristic of their attempt, the spirit of devotion. They went forth with their lives in their hands. They spoke powerfully, for they spoke for their own lives, for their country, and its reformation and deliverance, for the world, and for God's truth; and they were prepared for all the consequences; they laid their account with abuse and calumny and suffering. They had the true spirit of martyrdom—I say the true spirit; there are false spirits of martyrdom, and two especially,—one of them a mere antagonism—a sort of warlike struggle—a partisan strife—in which a man braves death on the scaffold, or at the stake, in much the same way as a soldier braves it on the field of battle, and, like him, with a kind of vindictive feeling, and a desire that his own blood may be avenged. We find much of this in the records of martyrdom in the third and fourth centuries; we find, also, a great deal of Luther's reformation stained and vulgarised by this spurious principle of martyrdom. But there is another sort of martyrdom—a mere sordid and calculating spirit—in which the individual has, indeed, a strong faith in future good and glory, probably a very mean conception of that in which they are to consist, and in which he behaves like a prudent person in bearing present sufferings, which, he thinks, will not only balance his account, but leave a large amount of profit in his favour in that region to which he is going for his recompense. He becomes a shareholder in the heavenly inheritance, buying in at a cheap rate; and is content to pay

the deposits of suffering and martyrdom here, in order to realise a large estate hereafter. There is nothing of the real spirit of martyrdom either in the vindictiveness of the one, or in the sordidness of the other. The true martyr is the mildest and the meekest of men—the gentlest in his speech, manners, and thoughts—overflowing with the milk of human kindness to all mankind—ready to hold on his way inoffensively, and with the purest disinterestedness; for it is the good of others that is realised in his principle of action, and not any recompense of his own, whether in this world, or in the world to come. He is a martyr simply because he cannot falsify himself: he will not be untrue to his own moral feelings; and there is no force in calumny, or in the infliction of brute violence, to make him capable of saying that which he does not think, or of outpouring that which he knows is not the reality of his being. In this simple-mindedness—in all gentleness, forbearance, and kindness—he will pass through suffering with a real love for his persecutors, instead of being ready to pour forth vindictive imprecations upon them; and, however he may be battered from without, he feels that he is at one within—a building fitly framed together, and, therefore, God's temple, and his own secure abode.

I will only mention, further, of the apostolic movements, that, while they grounded themselves upon the past, they were ever looking and moving onwards to the future. It has been the great mistake into which reformers have been liable to fall, that they have been too regardless of the past—that they have not sufficiently realised the truth, that whatever of good is to come to man should grow, and naturally grow, out of the good that has already come to him—that there is a continuity in it; and that although old forms, when they become obsolete, must either gradually dissolve away of themselves, or be shattered by the first rude stroke that assails them, still there is in them—or they would not have been—some principle of good, to elicit which is the object of the reformer, in order that by it he may be guided in his future course. The apostles grounded every thing upon the Old Testament; and yet, in doing so, they made the New Testament. They worshiped the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob—they appealed with all the

primary power of admiration to the Mosaic institutions; but they knew of no finality in their religion; and, while thus preserving whatever had been worthily cherished, they made their advances as events guided them, overstepping the limits of ancient prejudice and bigotry,—going first to Gentile proselytes, and then to Gentile idolaters,—until, from a religion that seemed exclusively Jewish, Christianity became a system of which Judaism was the least important portion. This I take to be the guidance of wisdom. The forms and embodiments of the people's convictions may change, and must change, with the advance of time and of knowledge; but they change according to principles which are simple, true, everlasting, and so imbedded in the human heart that we may trace them through all the past time, as they will be traceable through all the future time, of humanity. And of the power of these principles,—of their supremacy over all the little petty compromises of statesmen and of parties, and over all enactments and institutions and constitutions,—there is a beautiful description in the work upon Slavery, by Dr. Channing, just republished here, in which he appeals from prejudices more deeply rooted than, in this country, we can possibly conceive, to those simple principles which must triumph over the demoralising institution as it exists in some parts of the United States.

Whatever stands in the way of an advancing world will surely soon be crushed out of sight, and dissolve into dust or thin air. Whatever prescription, superstition, sordid interest, party compromise, or any of the little and petty feelings and trickeries of men may do, they cannot long uphold arrangements which are inconsistent with those great truths for which the apostles perilled their lives, and which Christianity has made the professed doctrine of the entire civilised human race. These must prevail; and in all great reformations there has been something analogous to the history in the Acts of the Apostles. There has been an outpouring of the spirit of God, stirring up men's minds to see and proclaim the truth, and act in harmony with it, and assert in themselves and in others the dignity of their nature, and burst the petty forms of morality, and ascend to its pervading element of love, which Christ taught as the great summary of duty to God and man. And when we

behold and rejoice in such outpourings, when we trace them at different intervals through the long course of human history, we may indeed bless God in our hearts, and feel that we are then in the noblest manner commemorating the Whitsuntide of Christianity, the day of Pentecost, when the apostles opened their high commission for the world's instruction and deliverance.

There was this sort of outpouring of God's spirit in the great minds that stirred up the work of Luther's reformation, in Jerome of Prague, in our own Wickliffe, in the energetic Knox of Scotland, in Calvin, with his clear though iron-bound system, and in all who in different countries entered their protest against the despotism that had been exercised for ages over men's consciences, and asserted their own freedom of spirit in the interpretation of the scriptures. There was this outpouring in the intellectual age of our country, the time when its great men produced their great works, and linked their names together in such a constellation of mental splendour as no other time or region can boast of. There has been such outpouring whenever philanthropy has undertaken some great and good work, like the deliverance of the negroes from their slavish condition—first the abolition of the traffic in them, and then the breaking of their chains in the glorious work of emancipation. There is such an outpouring of the spirit of God whenever and wherever a great nation has risen to declare that it will not bear the pressure upon it of unequal laws and of hard institutions—of arrangements that tend only to spread suffering and misery and degradation amongst the many, whilst they effect the undue exaltation of the few. There is such an outpouring of God's spirit wherever the love of truth is strongly felt, and every one may partake of it—may partake in its good and in its glory—so long as he is himself individually true to the impartial convictions of his mind, true to the dictates of his own enlightened conscience, true to the impulses of a generous nature, and true to the aspirations of a heaven-born hope.

CHRIST A NATIONAL REFORMER.

No. II.*

May 26th, 1839.

The last two lectures have been directed, one of them to the delineation of that national reform which Christ contemplated in Judæa, and the other to the mode in which his principles and his purposes were carried out by the apostles after he was parted from them. I intend, in the present lecture, to revert from the last-mentioned of these topics to the former, and again to consider Christ as the national reformer of Judæa, with such illustration as may be thrown upon his character by his admonitions to the twelve apostles when he first sent them forth to preach to the people of Judæa—the admonitions which are recorded in the 10th chapter of the gospel of St. Matthew. In the first of these two lectures I described Jesus of Nazareth, not only as the deliverer of mankind, but as, in purpose and endeavour, the national reformer of Judæa —as a reformer and a patriot—as one imbued with that feeling which was ever so strong in the race of Abraham —the feeling which made the Psalmist, in a prior age, declare that he preferred Jerusalem above his chief joy—the feeling which Christ himself so touchingly expressed when he beheld the city and wept over it because it had not known the day of its visitation, the day which might have been that of its deliverance. We trace this feeling as directing his course, both of teaching and of action, to the raising of the children of Abraham by natural descent into the inheritors of the determinate and devout spirit of the patriarch in whom they boasted of their origin—as an attempt to give the laws of Moses that extensive and deeper meaning by which they should not only regulate external conduct, but should

* The first lecture will be found at p. 224.

become a test by which to try the thoughts and intents of the heart—and as conferring privileges upon the Jewish people as the people of God, not merely in some technical sense, so as to make them the basis of arrogance and of bigotry on their parts, but to realise in them greater moral resemblance to the Deity, and thus make them the benefactors of the world by their becoming agents to raise humanity into a similar condition of privilege and of expectancy. And in the last lecture we saw the apostles following out this grand purpose—we found them, though their Master was taken from them, not standing idly gazing up into heaven, but applying their hands with might to the work of regenerating the earth—we found them making their appeal to the people with that fervency which originated in a glowing heart, as being most likely to find its way to the human heart, even where it is fenced with bigotry and coldness—we saw them binding themselves together on a fraternal plan in a state of the greatest freedom, simplicity, and union, and thus becoming the seed of God, the seed of thoughts and principles of a generous and beneficent description, to all the world, imbued with the true spirit of martyrdom, neither seeking it antagonistically as aspiring partisans, nor yet reckoning upon it by a sordid calculation as the purchase of so much future good by so much present suffering, but endowing it with that spirit of meekness, that simplicity and truthfulness, which would not deny what it knows in order to escape the application of corporal pain and torture, which triumphs over evil by good, and by love over persecution. We saw them reverting to the past, and building upon the past, worshiping the God of their fathers, and continually referring to their Old-Testament scriptures—but, while they quoted the Old Testament, themselves making the New Testament, and finding in the past the germs of whatever was to be great and glorious in futurity. And the charge, so called, which Christ delivered to them when he gave them their first commission, contains within itself the indication of those dispositions and of the procedure afterwards developed. It is the root from which they sprang—its words are the spirit and life which they received, and by which they were animated—it shows them deriving from him the strength with which they spake, the power which they wielded, and the purposes to which their lives were

devoted. It will be better, perhaps, for me to read this admonition entirely through, and then to make it the foundation of some expository comments. After naming the twelve apostles, and adverting to the fact of the commission that was given them, the evangelist thus proceeds in his narrative:

"These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand. Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give. Provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses, nor scrip for your journey, neither two coats, neither shoes, nor yet staves: for the workman is worthy of his meat. And into whatsoever city or town ye shall enter, inquire who in it is worthy; and there abide till ye go thence. And when ye come into an house, salute it. And if the house be worthy, let your peace come upon it: but if it be not worthy, let your peace return to you. And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet. Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrha in the day of judgment, than for that city. Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves. But beware of men: for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues; and ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles. But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you. And the brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child: and the children shall rise up against their parents, and cause them to be put to death. And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved. But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another: for verily I say unto you, Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel,

till the Son of man be come. The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord. It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household? Fear them not therefore: for there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; and hid, that shall not be known. What I tell you in darkness, that speak ye in light: and what ye hear in the ear, that preach ye upon the housetops. And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows. Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven. Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household. He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me. He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it. He that receiveth you receiveth me, and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me. He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward; and he that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward. And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, He shall in no wise lose his reward."

Now, if we inquire what was the object of these admonitions, with what course of proceeding do they best harmonise, I think it is clear that the speaker of them was

contemplating not merely action upon individuals, but a national action. He was making his appeal to the Jewish people. He sent forth his seventy disciples in like manner afterwards. They were to ascertain whether the Jewish people as a mass, as a body, accepted him or rejected him as the spiritual reformer and regenerator of their nation. Individual action, of course, was contemplated; for what is the object of all institutions, what the end and aim of all reformation, what the purpose of all civil and social change, but to produce humanity in a higher and better condition in the individual? This is the ultimate purpose of all things, this is the object of society, this is the object of creation and of Providence. But the immediate purpose was such a national reformation as I described in the first of these lectures. It was not a crusade for the establishment of a creed. There is nothing similar in it to the charges which are delivered to missionaries sent to the heathen in our days—there is no direction what doctrines they were to preach, what belief in propositions they were to exact; Christ did not tell his apostles, Ye shall command them to believe in the plague of their own hearts, in redemption by the suffering of a substitute for the vindication of divine justice, in the mystery of the Trinity, in the eternity of hell torments. There is no such string of doctrines; nor is there the opposite string: it is no more like the Unitarian than like the Trinitarian directions to a missionary. There is no command to explode dogmatical errors, however long established or widely spread; there is no direction to assault, with all the weapons of controversy, what men held as the word and faith and truth of God in the different places they were to visit; there is no admonition to call them together, and to set up one creed against another creed, and one form against another form; there is no reference to any thing of the sort. They were to be invited to exercise their confidence in one who had shown himself worthy of their confidence, and to place themselves under his guidance in the path in which he was qualified to lead them to a better national condition. Nor did he send them forth to found a Church, to lay the basis of a great spiritual domination; he did not erect them into a hierarchy; he did not tell the twelve that they should be bishops, and the seventy that they should be priests and deacons, and that

they were to scatter themselves over Judæa, and first take possession of a tenth of the produce, and then convert, if they could, a tenth of the inhabitants. There was no application of the ordinary machinery of churches and of establishments to their operations. There was no direction as to the terms on which they were to admit members therein, whether by baptism, infant or adult, or by examination into their opinions. There was no indication whatever of the formation of a spiritual body, with its head, and its officers and nobility, as it were, of different ranks and degrees, with the laity as the basis of all, and yielding materials for the support and for the splendour of all. It had nothing to do with such an institution as that which, between eleven and twelve centuries ago, commenced on this day in this country; for in the saintly memoranda of the calendar, to-day is the day of St. Austin—St. Austin, the Romish monk who began the conversion of this isle in the time of the Saxons to Christianity, as Christianity was then taught at Rome; who laid the foundation of what is called the Church of England; who was the first English primate, the first Archbishop of Canterbury; who forms, therefore, the link of connection, or channel of succession, between the episcopacy of this country and the previously existing episcopacy of the Romish Church; who is an essential link in that chain of apostolic succession which in our own days has been boasted of in no very measured terms, and in virtue of which something of a preternatural character is claimed even for the clergy of our own times. It is not thus that God's spirit descends from one man to another through successive generations—it is not thus that the spirit of Christ and of glory has ever been transmitted. There is, indeed, a succession—and we may call it an apostolical succession—of those gifts by which Providence points men out as teachers of their brethren, by which it makes them each other's inspiration, and raises up one after another, that the world may never want its guiding light, although that light may not generally be recognised until the generation in which its possessors lived has passed away, and then posterity acknowledges that a prophet was in the land, and begins to treasure up his words and to imbibe from them those moral and spiritual tendencies which they were meant to be the means of communicating. In this way our own

land, like others, has its apostolic succession, and one of which it may well be proud. Whether in lofty teachers, or in mighty poets, or in profound philosophers, or in wise statesmen, or in fervent philanthropists, from generation to generation has been kept up an unbroken chain: so that whenever an Elijah mounted in his car of fire to heaven, there was evermore an Elisha to receive his falling mantle, and to go forth as the apostles went forth—to heal the mentally sick, to cleanse the morally leprous, and to raise the spiritually dead.

But it is not merely the object of Christ in these admonitions, but the peculiar character which they bear, that deserves our attention, and that illustrates the national portion of his work and mission; and one of their most remarkable characteristics is his exceeding fearlessness of misinterpretation. He said to them, Go only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel,—go not out into the town of the Gentiles, into the city of the Samaritans; and yet he knew that he had sheep that were not of the Jewish fold, and his own thoughts and heart were seldom long without reverting to those that were without and beyond, but equally included in his own generous plan; and so in a later portion of this charge he tells them that he is come to set the members of a household at variance with one another, and not to send peace, but a sword. He must have felt that both these classes of expression, and others, perhaps, in the discourse which I read to you, are very liable to misinterpretation; but a great and earnest mind is seldom very solicitous in this matter; it is not continually asking, What will people say? how will they pervert this or that? what evil use can they make of my unguardedness in this matter? It does not stop to inquire whether it is guarded or unguarded—it knows that honest hearts will not pervert, and that base ones will, whatever care may be taken; and therefore it goes on straightforward to its object. The tree that should ever be shrinking and curling up its leaves in order that they might avoid any breath of heaven that should blow too rudely upon them, would never put forth to the sun the full lustre and beauty of its foliage—would never furnish a refreshing shade for the birds that nestle in its branches, nor for man who reposes beneath it. And so it is in efforts of this sort:

they are crippled by a continual apprehensiveness of what will be said, of what will be thought, of what perversion will be made in this or that quarter. Beneficence aims at positive good; so that it moves towards the accomplishment of the work which it is bent upon achieving, it finds itself quite at leisure to let the cavillings of those who are determined to misinterpret go on as they may, and die away as they must.

One might exemplify this timorous disposition, and the practices which cause it, in the history of many sects. Perhaps it is not more prominent in any one denomination whatever, than in that which in some respects had, and in many respects claimed, the merit of superior boldness and freedom in matters of religion—I mean the Unitarians. How exceedingly sore have some of them been about what may be said as to this or that incautious expression, about what scandal might be given as to this and that clear and bold statement of principles that were alike founded in reason and in religion; and how markedly has time rebuked them! There was a period when the name of Dr. Priestley was scarcely ever mentioned without some qualification of the praise that might be conceded to it: an able and eminent and useful man, but then so exceedingly precipitate and incautious, so far-going,—and truly he was far-going, for his name will go far beyond all the detractions from its worth that in his lifetime were continually uttered, even by those who professed to be friends and admirers; for the time there was when there was scarcely a respectable Unitarian to be found who did not shrug up his shoulders at the incautious phraseology, at the hardihood of his speculations, and the immense injury this must do to the cause of rational theology. His writings, outliving that time, and going onwards majestically, are still gathering their glory, and will gather it more and more as the union of reason and religion, and their identification, is more generally comprehended.

But while the timorous spirit deserves animadversion on the one hand, not less so, on the other, does the disposition to hold the free-spoken man literally to his words, when it is plain, perhaps, that he meant them in a figurative sense,—to endeavour to affix—as some, in their antagonism to Christianity, have endeavoured to affix—a stigma on such

expressions of Christ as that he came not to send peace, but a sword—interpretations that are at war with all that forms his character, with the pervading spirit of his instructions, with the whole tendency of his religion—perversions that disgrace not those on whose words they are fixed, but those from whose minds they flow; for who can study the Christ of the gospels, and understand such phraseology in the literal meaning which has often been injuriously contended for?

The discourse we are considering is also remarkable for the faith which it shows in God and in man. Christ sent forth his apostles confidently; he had no apprehension of their suffering inconvenience, of their perishing for lack of food; and though he knew they must be assailed by persecutions, and forewarned them of these persecutions, yet he also knew that they would be able to abide them, that they would endure them to the end; that if they were dragged before kings and governors, they would speak the thought that was in them,—speak it all the better for their not preparing themselves,—for, uninstructed men as they were, what would their preparation have been worth?—speak it all the better for obeying the impulse of the moment, pouring forth the things they had seen and heard, and thus showing the spirit speaking in them. He sent them forth to find admission where they might; for, as he had won love on the earth, he knew that they might win it also: and so those who followed him, and ministered to him, expected that they would find reception wherever the Son of Peace abode; and they went, and they verified his words. Employed as he himself was, according to his declaration, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work,"—knowing that he was doing the work of Providence,—he relied on Him that doth the raven feed—yea, providently caters for the sparrow—and felt secure of the guardian arm that would be extended around his own apostles.

As he called on man to believe in him, he began by showing that he believed in man: he had given the faith which he challenged, he had manifested the love which he sought to attract; and, in thus winning his way, he felt sure, in the strength of the human heart, of ultimate success. And this was the secret of the fluency, of the eloquence, of

the power of the apostles, which there was occasion to describe more particularly in the last lecture. They only said that which they knew and believed. The accumulation of words, the array of professed arguments, the production, the writing of books, had not then become the trade that it is now; and would to heaven it were not now the trade that it is! for while such is the case, word-manufacturing will never fail, and truth, honesty, power, will be, as it were, lost in a whirlwind of dust raised around them by those who only endeavour to minister to men's prejudices, to their ignorance, to their worldly interests, and to give to their writings that external show and glitter which a certain degree of talent may impart. Where communication, whether written or spoken, comes from the mind and heart of the individual, there is the power in it that there was in the preaching of the apostles,—a power to touch the hearts and minds of others,—a power to bring the spirit of man to its acknowledgment, and under its influence: so that, if the apostles were not endowed with tithes, nor vested with episcopal lordships, they had their revenues in the kind feelings that they won, they had their lordship in the reverence of honest intellects.

Observe, too, the exceeding simplicity of the means which Christ employed, and the extent of those means as compared with the number of his own followers. He sent forth these plain men to tell a plain tale, and to bring it home to the people of Judæa that they had the opportunity of being as a nation reanimated with the spirit of their ancient institutions, but with that spirit expanding and beautifying itself into a nobler aspect. He sent them forth for this purpose, apparently combining the efforts of all who submitted to his authority. We find that there were but one hundred and twenty disciples, the women included, when they met together at Jerusalem after their Master was parted from them. Probably many living in the provinces might be absent from that assemblage. But we find that he sent forth the twelve apostles first, and the seventy disciples afterwards. These must have included the greater portion, if not all, of those who had at that period assumed the character of disciples. He set every one of them at work. He regarded not the Christian name, the Christian spirit,—for its name did not then exist,—or rather, he regarded not their

discipleship to him, as any excuse for indolence, indifference, or apathy. He considered every one that called him Master and Lord as pledged thereby to put his hand to the plough, and to look not back, but to accomplish his portion of the work which God had given them all to do. And such is the true description of an apostolic character—such would be the true description of an apostolic priesthood—such is also the Christian character; and it would be the true description of a Christian church, assembly, or society. There are some who take a different view of this matter. I have in my hand a pamphlet on national education, just put forth by a clergyman of the Church of England, the Rev. Robert Wilberforce, son of the celebrated William Wilberforce,—in which he assails the scheme of national education that has lately been propounded by the government of this country, on account of what the clergy are fond of calling its latitudinarian spirit; which, according to them, cannot be reconciled with Christianity and the Church, unless it be exclusive. Nothing appears so dreadful as the notion of children, whose parents are of different religions, being taught together; and he speaks of the clergy as roused on this question in a manner which is rare in reference to political topics, because they belong to those—whom he seems to think the best portion of society—that dwell apart from these questions.*

It is not, I believe, the common apprehension that the clergy generally do thus dwell apart from what concerns the state of parties and the condition of our institutions; but if they do, or if there be any people influenced by those that so do, I demur to there being in this any thing whatever Christian or apostolical. Christ did not enjoin his apostles to dwell apart from matters which concerned the society in which they existed; he did not tell them to secrete themselves in this way; he sent them forth to preach, to proclaim that the kingdom of heaven was at hand: and what are half the social mischiefs in the world, but monuments of the mistake of these sacred and tranquil classes, evidences of their neglect of their duty and their want of faithfulness therein both to the cause of God and man? Why, had it not been for these retired and tranquil classes,

* There is no clue to the passage quoted from Mr. Wilberforce, but its nature will be apprehended from what follows.

would it have been possible, after the Reformation had once established itself in this country, that the fires of Smithfield should have been kindled, and should have blazed so long as they did in Queen Mary's time? would it have been possible, but for these retired and tranquil classes, that the benefits of civil freedom, in the great outbreak against the tyranny of Charles I., should have been so forfeited by the country as they were, so lost hold of and lost sight of, after they had been within the nation's grasp? If these retired and tranquil classes had ruled the destiny of the country, James II. would have reinstated Popery in the land, and its doctrines would have been taught side by side with those of passive obedience and non-resistance, which were then so extensively patronised by the clergy of the Church of England. It is by this indifference that evil is permitted to continue in the world when every body knows it to be evil, and to assume to itself a conventionalism that challenges the forms and appearances of virtue. All real apostolic men, all men who have left their own impress upon their countrymen or upon the world, all men whose characters and writings have produced effects that make the heart thrill and the mind beam with light from age to age, have been men who mingled in those conflicts; and, however at times their souls might dwell apart in the richness of their own meditations, yet there were times also when they challenged the hottest strife, and were found foremost in its ranks, and thus won their crowns of glory or of martyrdom.

The apostolic spirit, as Christ has described it, would be the spirit in our day of blessing to man, and blessed in itself. Those who were animated by it would be simple in manners, without those incumbrances and corruptions that society often regards as the exclusive objects of its respect,—going forth like the apostles on a definite path, to be trodden with a firm step,—gratulating the sons of peace as their brethren wherever they can find them,—stern in their admonitions and rebukes, but overflowing with human kindness, and endeavouring to display to all the worth of the soul, not according to the technicalities of theology, but according to the powers of the life that is within us to unfold the faculties and affections of our being, and to constitute the happiness of that being,—venerating the spirit

that is in themselves, the spirit of God, that makes man one with God, and recognising it in its different degrees in all humanity. Such men would work results now analogous to those which the apostles achieved in their time; and they would prolong from generation to generation that song of thanksgiving, that ceaseless exclamation, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty," which consecrates to the Spirit of all good the universe which that Spirit pervades.

It would be useless to speculate on what would have been the course of events had the national reformation of Judæa been accomplished, had its people generally put themselves under the guidance of Christ, and yielded to the teaching of his commissioned ministers. It was not thus to be. The effect on the world was to be produced by the Jews' rejection of him, not by their acceptance. With a portion of the Jews he did prevail—with such a portion of that people as sufficed, though they were a little leaven, to leaven the mass of the civilised world, and to raise up a new spirit in the earth. The Mosaic institutions were doomed to perish. The nation had accomplished its separate existence as a race, had accomplished the great purpose of Providence, in producing a sufficient number of men to go forth and become the leaders of mankind into a purer worship and a more benevolent morality. The system, the polity itself, soon to perish in its desolation under the Roman power, became like some aged but majestic tree, stricken, withered, blasted by the lightning; but one bough of it was green and flourishing, and that put forth in abundance its tendrils and its leaves, as if to make up for the devastation which had passed over all the rest—it extended until it filled the earth with its foliage and its fruits, and men have rejoiced in its shade; and in it we recognise the power of life which, when the nation perished by departing from the spirit of their institutions, preserved enough vitality to pass into a new form, to replace, and infinitely more than replace, all that had gone before; and thus to win the rewards of the prophetic character and of the righteous man, and give to the world, not merely the cup of cold water that prevents the pilgrim from fainting in his course, but those enjoyments which are the foretaste of the fulness of blessings to be realised hereafter.

PRACTICAL EVILS OF SECTARIANISM.

June 2d, 1839.

The subject of this morning's lecture is, the practical evils of the spirit of sectarianism.

When the principles and tendency of the Reformation began to show themselves most distinctly in this country, its religious condition was the subject of scornful remark by the Catholic people of the Continent. They used to point to England with derision at the increasing number of its sects, at the constant division into parties that seemed to be going on indefinitely, at the claims and pretensions which these parties set up in relation to one another or to the whole Christian world; and they exclaimed scornfully, These are the consequences of the right of private judgment claimed by Luther and the other reformers—these are the fruits of the spirit of the Reformation—they show that it leads to the destruction of all Christian unity, and to the infinite multiplication of schisms and heresies.

But they were in the wrong. These fruits of the Reformation were wholesome for the world: they were not only the natural and necessary results of the change which had taken place, of the great mental insurrection which had been stirred up against the dominion over conscience; but they were good for the progress of the human mind; they were connected with the advance of our nature—they were the exulting bound of intellectual freedom when it first felt its own achievements, and saw the power and extent of the victory which had been obtained over priestly domination.

In the progress of sectarianism, as it was then evinced, there was the power of individuality ever manifesting itself,

and the union of the parties amongst themselves was chiefly that of self-defence against persecution from without. But, after a while, the world came to a pause in its application of the principles and spirit of the Reformation. The Protestant world, in fact, adopted the Papal principle from which itself had been a secession, and against which itself had been in insurrection. Churches set up as a final rest the creeds which had been the symbols of progression. It endeavoured, after having claimed the right to go so far from all national rules and creeds and modes of worship, to say to its own followers, Thou shalt go no farther: and that which had been the league of free spirits for their own mutual protection against the dominion of priestcraft, became in turn the supporter of a mental slavery if possible more galling and debasing—became the power of restraint and of persecution over individuals; instead of one pope, there were popes by scores and by hundreds; every little religious association reënacted within itself the attempt at despotism against which originally it had been in rebellion: —it was as if the great serpent of hierarchical corruption had been cut into a hundred pieces, and each of them, according to the old fable, had become instinct with life and powerful in its venom; and with the world in this sectarianised condition, it is our lot to live with a hissing and a stinging all around us.

The word sect or sectarianism, according to the etymology, has a double meaning, being derived either from that which signifies to follow, or from that which means to cut off, to separate; and sectarianism practically realises both senses of the word. It is founded on the custom of following some leader whose tenets and dogmas are set up for an infallible and enduring interpretation of whatever be the ultimate authority of the religious doctrine; while the very union which is thus formed, the party union thus created, is a breaking off from the general union of Christianity and of humanity: the union of sectarianism is of itself a separation and an antagonism.

It does not seem that Christ himself contemplated the formation of his followers into one great sect. He spake of his flock, and, by anticipation, of the Gentiles who should unite with the Jews in looking to him as their spiritual guide; but he did not draw off his followers from

the common worship established in Judæa—he did not organise them into a society or a Church, with laws and regulations for their guidance formally laid down. Throughout the evangelical history, there are no symptoms of that kind of separation, even on the broadest principle of Christianity itself, which has actually taken place in the world—that alienation of the production of which the use of the word Christian was one of the first distinctive marks; but, on the other hand, every thing about the mode in which Christ taught leads us rather to suppose that he wished, as it were, to fling truth upon the broad field of the world, there to let it grow where the soil was good, or wither where the soil was bad, according to its own nature and the different kinds of human nature which it encountered. But if the organisation of Christianity into one great sect appears not originally to have been contemplated, still less could there be any tendency or desire towards that multiplication of sects in Christianity which so soon after was realised. In fact, the apostles, who witnessed the first germination of these seeds of bitterness, put forth their utmost exertions to stop their progress, to destroy their evil vitality: they directed some of their most earnest, impressive, and even vehement rebukes against those who said, I am of Paul, and others who said, I am of Apollos, and so on; they inculcated unity, not of profession of dogma, not of form even; they said, Let every man be persuaded in his own mind; he that regards the days, let him regard them, and he that disregards them, let him disregard them; they pointed their most powerful arguments, as well as uttered their most vehement rebukes, against those tendencies which in later times have so extensively prevailed, and which now fill the world with bitterness and contention.

In looking upon the results which are passing before us in our own time and under our own eyes, one of the most obvious is, that the spirit of sectarianism obstructs the full comprehension and best appreciation of the scriptures themselves. The book which sectarianism most affects to honour is that over which it spreads a shroud of comparative darkness, is that over which its powers of perversion are most mightily exercised. In describing my own appreciation of the Bible, I shall probably be com-

pelled to dissent to a considerable extent from that which prevails in the nominal Christian world. I certainly do not, with some, regard it as containing in every sentence of the Old and the New Testaments infallible and universal truth. Such a pretence set up for it seems to me the most effective mode of destroying whatever claims it really does possess, for it is one which cannot by possibility be supported—it is one which, by the scriptures themselves, is nowhere asserted—it is one which is inconsistent with the gradual advance of scientific knowledge and with the recorded advance of theological opinion, as that advance is placed before us in the scriptures themselves. I do not agree with those who are at the present time claiming for the Bible that it is the best instrument of juvenile instruction or education; its moral power is immense, the exercise which it affords for the intellect is unbounded, but it was not given to the world as a class or school book. It contributes to the religious training of the human race, but it is not an implement for the instruction of infancy; it cannot supersede the ordinary modes of leading the mind to the comprehension of the use of language, and to an acquaintance with the elements of science. Religion is the result, and the comprehension of the religion of the Bible is the result, of a trained and developed and instructed mind. Nor should I be disposed to agree with those who represent the Bible as the sole and exclusive depository of all religious knowledge, feeling, and principle; for the writers of many parts of the scriptures themselves looked out of the scriptures for the stimulus and food of their religion—they marked the sun shining in his brightness, they watched the ways of Providence, they saw God in his creation as well as in what their hearts told them was his revelation, and they adored him in all the manifestations of his spirit, and so much the more because these manifestations were manifold. Christ took the lilies of the field as the text of one of his sermons, and David the stars of heaven for the burden of one of his psalms. But, with these differences—which it is necessary for me to notice—still, I think there can be no doubt that the Bible is the world's first book. Centuries elapsed in its formation, centuries more have brought it to the test of human thought and feeling; it has stood the criticism of ages—it

has exercised a power and an influence that can be ascribed to no other work whatever—it has ruled men's souls—it has gratified the aspirations of the most mentally ambitious after the contemplation of intellectual grandeur—it has ruled in the hearts of those whose moral feelings went forth with the most power in philanthropic exertions for the good of their fellow-creatures—it has shown itself still able to maintain its place with the advancement of man's mind, with the increasing clearness of his light, and with the enlargement of the sphere of his contemplation—it has proved itself a powerful and a glorious book. And when will the world let it die? under what circumstances is it possible that it should become obsolete? Were its historical facts disputed and its miracles exploded—were Christianity itself no longer to be the term that designates the religion of the civilised world—the Bible would survive even such a change as this; it would survive the most complete revolution that we can imagine of men's thoughts and opinions—it would hold its place, it would assert its power, it would command undying reverence and yield exalted enjoyment. And how has the sectarian principle dealt with this great and good, this blessed and glorious book?—how, but so as to intercept the direct communication between it and the minds of individuals? It has begun with prosing all its poetry, and with cutting up all its continuity. It precedes it by catechisms and teachings and creeds, that give the mind a previous bias; and sends it to the contemplation of the grand prospects that are there unfolded with a coloured medium, through which it views them all. It influences the very perception of the intellect, so that it can see nothing as it really is, but is in danger at every step, under the notion of honestly receiving the sense of the book it reads, of only imbibing the commentaries and interpretations that have been piled upon it, and that have been established so long and inculcated so early as to give the mind no fair play with the scriptures, nor any chance of receiving that impression which the uninstructed mind, that never heard of Christianity, might have realised. Who is there of us all that can say he is capable, even with the utmost voluntary exertion of mind, of receiving the direct and genuine impression of any portion of the sacred writings? How much ad-

heres to us involuntarily—how much of the creeds that have been established by political authority, of the interpretations that have been instilled into us in the very earliest education, of the views which have obtained currency for all time and through all countries, and which spread themselves around all intellects as a coloured atmosphere! All these are in the way,—all these, however much they may be resisted, will still have an undoubted influence; and it is owing to these different contrivances of sects and parties, to the proselyting zeal with which their admonitions are inculcated upon the youthful mind, to the general accompaniments which they furnish to the use of the Bible,—it is owing to these that we cannot now ever hope to arrive, with much toil and care, at a distinct perception and appreciation of the worth of the scriptures, any more than the sight which has been diseased by unnatural applications from infancy can hope distinctly to discern the colouring and form of objects, and to see them as they really are in the light of heaven. In this way the influences of sectarianism have had an evil effect upon the greatest of all their own professed objects. Instead of making God's word known to the human mind, they have raised a partition between the human mind and the written and every other word of God. Creeds, catechisms, ever come before it.

Another evil of a different description is, that sectarianism prevents the people of this country from reaping the full advantage of their national institutions for spiritual culture. We are told that a tenth of the produce of the land is set apart, reserved from the distribution of private property, as a provision for the mental and moral culture of the people of the nation; and such an arrangement certainly ought to have obtained, if it did not obtain. It is founded in wisdom, it injures no party or class, it is a treasure which is adapted from generation to generation to multiply itself and to bring forth the best possible results—it is one which gives to the people a better opportunity of becoming generally well informed, moral, and progressive in their attainments and in their enjoyments, than any other that could be devised. But this has been sectarianised,—this has been not merely withdrawn from mental and moral culture, to restrict it to Christianity;

but it has been withdrawn from Christianity as a general and extensive system, and confined to the purposes of one particular class, sect, or denomination. And what is the result? That the obsolete opinions and interpretations of the sixteenth century are artificially kept up, when, had the mind been left to its own free and natural course, they would long ago have been swept away to the moles and to the bats. It has preserved opinions, some of them so preposterous and contradictory, some of them so far-fetched and obscure, some of them so obviously at war with all the dictates of truth and of nature, of reason and of experience, that they could not possibly, without such artificial help, have maintained their standing in the world, nor claimed their place amongst the actually existing forms of opinion and of thought. If there be no improvement, if there be no more capability in England at the present day to form a rational interpretation of the Hebrew and Christian scriptures than there was three centuries ago, to what purpose is it that the powers of the mind have been developed here as in scarcely any other country, ancient or modern? Has God raised up for us in our own region, and speaking our own language, scientific men, discoverers, poets, and philosophers, in vain? Has the gift of genius been bestowed from generation to generation, for the world to reap no fruits from its light and lustre? But for canonisation, but for the erecting into a permanent form the speculations which obtained currency in the commencement of the fifteenth century, and which profess to be themselves the infallible interpretation of scripture,—but for these, we should have traced the footsteps of our great and good men, we should have seen the results of their labour and of their intelligence, in the common religion of the country, in its national religion, in that which professes to identify itself with the government of the country, and to be a portion of the constitution of things under which we live. Sectarianism has nullified all this,—it has precluded all correction, all advance, all expansion and elevation: it gives us the crystallised forms of dead men's thoughts, creeds, dogmas, articles, which are as dead now as their founders are; it elevates these as the only objects of homage, and sacrifices to these the living dictates of intelligence and emotion.

The tendency of sectarianism has always been to depress real religion—spiritual religion—and to introduce, in its stead, faith in dogma and the observance of ceremony. Even under the Jewish dispensation—even in that preliminary training of direct prohibition or injunction, and of external regulation—a state of things obviously only fitted to endure for a limited period, and then to make way for something better—even there the comparative worthlessness of ceremony and of sacrifice was repeatedly and solemnly declared. It was announced in the name of the Deity, "I will have mercy, and not sacrifice;" and when the Christ came, this declaration was expanded still more—the spirituality of religion and of worship was inculcated in the most distinct terms, and the world was called upon to render its homage to the pervading Spirit. And yet sectarianism, by the arrangements to which I have adverted, is powerful enough to keep up such a farrago of contradictions and absurdities as the Athanasian Creed: it elevates into the most sacred duties such observances as that of baptism—a beautiful emblem in an Eastern country, but unmeaning here—and yet of which the most superstitious interpretation is frequently given. It dwells intently upon Sabbatarianism—upon a kind of Sabbatarianism which abounds in perversion, or more properly in direct falsehood—applies to one day the command given in reference to another day, and applies it in a sense which is altogether inconsistent with the original application of the injunction. But these are things on which sectarianism prides itself as religion, which it substitutes for loving the Lord our God with our heart and soul, and our neighbour as ourselves. There wants nothing but the complete gratifying of the power and of the desires of the sectarian spirit to expel all real religion from the earth, and substitute in its stead a mere hollow outside of professed reverence for dogmas which cannot be comprehended, and the observance of forms from which no spiritual good is derived.

In its influence on society, the sectarian spirit ever generates hostility and bitterness—it sets every man's hand against his neighbour, on account of that very circumstance which should make peace between them—it produces dislike for that which ought to attract affection, and insures the

severest condemnation for that which should insure respect, namely, a man's exercising his own powers upon the Bible which God has given, upon nature which God has spread before him, upon his own heart which God has called him to study. As far as he does this of himself, is the probability that he will take a different course from others—that there will be something to mark it distinctively for his own —that there will be that individuality of character with which Nature has endowed all her children—that, in proportion as his mental and moral being is more amply developed and more strongly confirmed, it will give traces of the peculiarity of that being, in the conclusions which he draws as truth, and in the observances to which he is addicted as the means of usefulness and of mental culture. And yet, in the very proportion in which this good is realised—in the very proportion in which his individuality is apparent in his notions and in his practices and pursuits—in that proportion is the ban of sectarianism placed upon him, the clamour of sectarianism raised against him, the anger of sectarianism stimulated, until denunciations of his supposed depravity, and of his certain condemnation hereafter, ring from many a tongue, and we have the deplorable exhibition of some poor, feeble, erring mortal being arrogating the powers of the Deity, and usurping the authority of the Judge of all.

In what course of life is not a man liable to be impeded by the differences—the honest and, it may be, correct and sound differences—of his opinions from those of others? In pursuing his course of education at either of the established universities, he may find that—with whatever adornments his mind is enriched, to whatever heights of learning he may arise—though he may go through the labour, he may not reap the recompense. Theological sectarian conditions interpose between him and the honours which he might rightfully claim. Or if, instead of this comparatively luxuriant and privileged state of existence, he is endeavouring to work his own way in the world, if he would find the means of his own bodily support by yielding mental instruction to others, here again at every turn the sectarian spirit meets him, and says, You shall not teach even the commonest science, or the art of translating from one language into another—you shall not teach any kind of

knowledge—because you have shown that, on the most important subjects, you are determined to gain knowledge for yourself. The fairest prospects have often been blighted by this species of social persecution—men have often been almost driven from the world, and compelled to endure its greatest hardships, who had earned this lot for themselves by deserving too well of the world.

The sectarian spirit interferes with the public good, with our reaping the full measure of advantage that ought to result from the social union—it exercises its perverting influence over political combinations. We have a specimen of this at the present moment, when the proposal to apply a portion of the national funds to the object of national education, when the simplest and least objectionable step that could by possibility be taken—that of establishing a seminary for teachers, and, as there are different religious denominations in the country, for teachers without respect to this difference of religious denomination—when such a measure as this is opposed by thousands, we might almost say by millions—opposed simply because it recognises the fact that there are differences of religion, and treats them all with a generous impartiality. That which should be reckoned the merit of it—that it deals with all on the same impartial principle, on the right principle of political government—as it is the principle of religion, of Providence, and of Divine government—is made the fiercest ground of attack. Thus, the best recommendation is made the bitterest objection, and sectarianism boldly elevates itself against all that can claim aright the name of national. It tramples down nationality in order to make it a sacrifice to the principles of exclusion. And thus it is that the best men—the heralds of human improvement, those who have led the way towards the possession of new regions in science, towards the enjoyment of new thoughts and new hopes for individuals and for the world—thus it is, I say, that they have generally been martyred, the martyrs of the sectarian spirit. It is only in a subsequent generation that their names rise to honour, that their merits are appreciated. Only bring them back, only place them in a different generation, and the history becomes the same, and one after another is liable to the same injurious treatment. Were the poet Burns now living, strongly as his

poetry appeals to every human heart, all that is so admired and so admirable in him would not save him from the danger of being again threatened with expulsion from his situation, and losing his command even of the very necessaries of life if he expressed himself with his own native independence of soul. Were Sir Isaac Newton now living, and making known for the first time his discovery of the real system of the universe, it would not save him from the species of clamour which is actually set up against discoverers in our own day in geological science; whom there seems to be the disposition to put down, as if they were blasphemers against Moses, because they have deciphered something of Nature's own records in the process of creation. Were Milton now living, he would still be, as in his own day, the despised old schoolmaster; and it would be left to future times for his immortal work to make its way and to command the homage of men's souls. Were Locke now living, he might again be expelled from an orthodox university—he might again be held up to odium—for asserting the liberality of the Christian spirit, and the simplicity of its requirements. And were Jeremy Taylor now putting forth his *Liberty of Prophesying*, and speaking according to the generous impulses of his own heart, he might be handled as roughly by the High-Church critics and commentators of our day as the Bishops of Durham and of Norwich have been for showing, or for having been supposed to show, their liberality of spirit by contributing towards the publication of the work of a Unitarian theologian.

Sectarianism only tolerates the great and the good at a convenient distance. Let them belong to a bygone age, and then all due honour may be rendered to their memories; and honour may specially be rendered if it be an uninfluential sort of homage, stirring up no kindred spirit to follow in their course, and to take up the work which they had continued from the generation preceding. The new, the living, the real, the vitally operating in its own day and time, and operating for the highest good, has ever been the object of sectarian animosity. Such is the spirit too prevalent amongst us, calling for the exertion of every well-informed and rightly disposed mind to check its agency—such is the spirit of sectarianism, obscuring the

Bible of which it professes almost to make a deity, preventing its contact with the human intellect, keeping it from that direct communication by which its full power may be realised in the soul of man, perverting the most liberal endowments and institutions from the public good, from a national application to a sectarian one,—sustaining obsolete opinions and notions, creeds and dogmas, which ought to have been allowed to yield, as in themselves they must have yielded, to the advancing power of man's free intelligence—exciting animosities and disputations in society, degrading character for the very reason which ought to be held as the exaltation of character, and making martyrs of the best and wisest, the most honourable and useful, of the human race. These are its bitter results and demonstrations; and against these, in the name of religion and of morality—in the name of the scriptures and of human nature—it becomes us to make our solemn protest.

THE BOOK OF ECCLESIASTES.

No. I.

June 16th, 1839.

There are many circumstances which surround the book of Ecclesiastes with interesting associations. It is the first book in the canon of scripture which was the subject of dispute, and it is said to have been so in the arrangement of the books of the Old Testament by the Jews after their return from the captivity—that is to say, there was a disputed book in the canon as soon as there was a canon of scripture at all; and this is a very natural result. When, instead of being content with that evidence of inspiration in the truth and power which commends itself to the human heart, divines set up a notion of a technical and preternatural inspiration—when they endeavour to draw a line between some books as entitled to the subjugation of human reason, and other books of which reason is allowed to judge—from that time there must needs be contentions of the sort which then began, and which, while they originally put this book into the class of questionable productions, afterwards excited similar discussions to a larger extent with regard to several of the books of the New Testament, on which controversy has continued to the present time. It may yet be regarded as an undecided question whether the two epistles of Peter be properly in the canon, whether the epistle ascribed to Jude be properly there, whether the book of Revelation be rightly there. Martin Luther, on the strength of his own opinion, raised the question whether the book of James was entitled to be considered as of authority: in his view, it so militated against the apostolic doctrine, that he was a sturdy opponent of its claims to authenticity or inspiration. The epistle to the Hebrews is similarly circumstanced, with this additional peculiarity, that

that book is itself anonymous; those who allow that they do not know the author, yet assume to decide with certainty, whoever he was, that he was preternaturally inspired. I apprehend that this is not the way to make the best use of books, whether sacred or profane. It not only generates an arbitrary division of the works, an undue invasion of the rights of the human mind, and ceaseless quarrels which are incapable of being decided, but it leads to consequences practically injurious to the mental interests, rights, and prospects of large communities. The most momentous and most desirable arrangement of something like a scheme of national education is at this very moment obstructed in this country on grounds connected with the admission or non-admission of certain books into the canon; and the Church of England claims to—nay, does—interfere to obstruct the extension of so desirable a blessing to Socinians on the one hand, because their canon is too little, and to Roman Catholics on the other, because their canon is too large. The admission or non-admission of disputed books thus stands in the way of the people having the ability to read any books at all. A better course, I think, is to apply to books what the apostle said to the Philippians: "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report among you," and so on, "if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things." And so I would say, whatsoever books are pure, just, true, lovely, and have earned by their own intrinsic merit a good report, let these be thought of, let whatever is valuable in them be extracted from them, derived by the human mind thence, and made its own; and thus shall we be best brought up in knowledge and in righteousness.

It is a curious contradiction that, while there was this dispute as to the claim of the book of Ecclesiastes to admission into the canon—and while another of the works of the same author, the Song of Solomon, was not thought proper by the Jews to be read by their children till they were thirty years of age—the very canonical scriptures, with which it is thus made doubtful whether these works ought to be allowed to associate, confer on him the dignity of "the wisest of men." It is rather a hard demand upon the human mind that it is at once to recognise an individual as

the wisest of men, and to question whether the wisest of his works is worthy of the same acceptation as the records preserved by the priests and prophets of the times in which they lived. It is somewhat of a contradiction that we should be obliged to receive without questioning the claims of a writer to be the wisest of men, and yet that his works should only be judged proper for perusal under certain circumstances and after a certain age. The fact, I think, renders either his wisdom questionable, or theirs by whom such a result was arrived at. And, in fact, wisdom and priestly rule have generally been thus antagonistic. The writers of the historical books of the Old Testament were deeply imbued with the feelings and associations that belong to their class and order. The antagonism may be traced in them which we have continually found in the world. In the course of time the objections wore away, the work was recognised, it took an unquestioned place; and thus the wisdom to which the aspirations of priestly domination put themselves in hostility, although denied in its own time, comes to be acknowledged in subsequent times, and takes its proper place in ruling the thoughts and opinions of mankind. The question then, indeed, becomes one of interpretation. The authority is allowed; and that same spirit which at first exerted itself to reject the claim, at last only interposes to pervert the interpretation.

The book of Ecclesiastes is interesting from its subject. All works which, like this, profess to be an inquiry into the chief good of human nature, into the object for the sake of which we are called into existence, into the aim which we should place before ourselves to realise—all objects contemplating such an end are interesting to man, if they are executed with any thing like intellectual power or moral experience. Both of these are to be found in the work before us. There is no class of human beings that is not interested in such an inquiry: there are scarcely any classes who do not feel themselves to be so interested, unless it be those, on the one hand, who are thoroughly absorbed by some ruling passion or temporal pursuit; or those, on the other hand, who are so worn down by daily toil that they have neither the time nor the inclination for any speculation whatever. And the very existence of these two classes, who are alienated from that speculation that most of all

concerns humanity, is of itself sufficient to show that one class makes a great mistake in its absorption; and that the inability of the other, through its being reduced into a state of mechanical operation, is a gross injustice, which society should do all in its power to remove, or at least to alleviate.

The book of Ecclesiastes has been sometimes regarded as a sort of penitential work. I do not think this is borne out by the impartial study of its contents. Solomon was a moral experimentalist; he had tried the question of the greatest good of human nature with all the resources which his peculiar circumstances placed within his reach: but he does not appear before us either as a man of disappointed ambition, or as one whose mind was burdened and stung by the power of remorse. In a work which I have before had occasion to quote from or to refer to, the theology of this book of Ecclesiastes is noticed as being amongst the very purest and most rational of any of the books of the Old Testament. I refer to Bauer's *History of the Theology of the Old Testament*. He there bestows the strongest laudations upon this work. "For the object we have in view," he says, "it is sufficient to remark that, notwithstanding the intense melancholy and the painful scepticism which pervade it, more just and elevated notions of God are to be found in this book than in any other, excepting Job, in the Old Testament. The narrow and selfish belief in a God who limits his benign care to a favoured few, to one spot of his creation, and the doctrine of a national God, who governs the world by his angels, have no place in Ecclesiastes. We cannot but lament that the writer has not enlarged on those first principles of religion, at which he only cursorily glances. The book is occupied with one great subject: the impossibility of comprehending the mysterious purposes of God to man—the divine awards of good and evil. The conviction that 'all is vanity' is continually presenting itself to the mind of the author; and yet a deep sense of the reality of religion is discernible in the midst of his scepticism."

The same author has endeavoured to counteract the common notion that Solomon lapsed into the practice of idolatry; and the book itself, I think, remarkably confirms his argument. While narrating the different modes in

which he had endeavoured to arrive at enjoyment—while telling, without fear or scruple, the devious course which he had taken for the accomplishment of that object—he makes no confession whatever of any thing like idolatrous practices; nor does it comport with all that we know of the extent and clearness and grasp of his mind. The conjecture, therefore, is that the accusation arose out of his possessing a tolerant disposition, which the priesthood of Judæa could not abide. "With respect," he says, "to Solomon's idolatry, we believe that in him it was rather tolerance than idolatry. Among the numerous inmates of his harem were many foreign women—Ammonites, Moabites, Sidonians, and others. It belonged to the splendour and state of an Eastern monarch or despot to possess an immense harem, whose inmates were chosen by preference from foreign nations. These women were unwilling to abandon their own worship and superstitions; slaves in a strange land, they clung closely to the religion of their childhood and nation; and they entreated Solomon to secure to them religious freedom. He yielded to their solicitations, and commanded high places and altars to be erected, upon which they might sacrifice to their own deities after their own manner. Though such an indulgence might have been sanctioned by the laws of humanity, and to a benevolent and reflecting mind might have appeared a reasonable concession, this erection of altars to foreign gods was a direct violation of the Jewish constitution, and led to much sinful idolatry among the people of Israel. The orthodox sighed over this act of their monarch, and regarded the subsequent desertion of the ten tribes, in the reign of his son (who, for his despotism and folly, merited such a lesson), as the punishment inflicted by Jehovah for this permitted and sanctioned idolatry; and our historiographers do not fail to consider this misfortune, as well as every other evil which afterwards befell the kings and the state, as the consequences of the insult offered by Solomon to the orthodox faith."

The character and history of the writer of Ecclesiastes add to the interest which we must needs feel on this point. He was the greatest monarch that the Jews ever possessed. His dominion was of larger extent than that of any other king who ever sat on the throne of Israel in Judæa: it

stretched from the Euphrates to the Nile. His celebrity extended over foreign nations; it seems to have spread far and wide; he established commercial relations with people whose very existence was before unknown to the Israelites. His long reign was a continuous course of peace and of prosperity. He cultivated the arts more than any other of their sovereigns, and encircled with his own glory whatever he produced. We are told that he spake three thousand proverbs, that he composed fifteen hundred songs or poems, that he spoke of all plants that grew, from the cedar of Lebanon to the hyssop that springeth out of the wall. He accumulated scientific knowledge. He embellished the gorgeous temple which he erected with all such kinds of artistical decorations as were allowed by the Mosaic constitution; while his own palace was not merely the abode of barbaric splendour, but was adapted to impress the most civilised and refined community. His fame to this day prevails in the East; and legends, arising from the extent of his knowledge, have associated the power of magic with his name, and represented him as the ruler of the spirits and powers of the invisible world. He was, as I have just said, a moral experimentalist. He had made trial, on his own account, of the different modes of realising happiness. He had run the ceaseless round of external circumstances, which are looked to by the superficial observer as the source of the highest enjoyment. He had found them vanity; and he has detailed in this work the results of his experience. He is described to us as the "Preacher." His moral essay is entitled "The words of the Preacher, the son of David, King of Jerusalem;" and I believe we may take the description literally. We may imagine—according to the custom which even now is found in Mahometan countries—that he allowed to come to him at his palace both the more distinguished of his own subjects, and those who, in different characters, came to his capital from foreign countries—that the Ecclesiastes itself was probably a discourse spoken or read to an assemblage of this description. We must imagine them gathering together in his palace—in that palace so celebrated for its decorations, with its cedar-beams inlaid with ivory and gold, with his own chair of state and all its rich carvings, with the different adornments that led those who resorted to him

through a succession of splendid scenes: there came the robed priest of Jehovah, and the Eastern prophet, with his plain garb, but with his sense of a sort of divine authority over the King and people of Israel; ambassadors or monarchs even came from a distance, as did the Queen of Sheba, that they might themselves perceive and thereafter bear witness to his wisdom; the priests of Egypt came, with their knowledge of the various products of the earth; and the Chaldean magi, skilled in the lore of astrology, and acquainted with the movements of the heavenly bodies; and perhaps even some of the chieftains from that remoter region which was then pouring forth its myriads in order to accomplish the destruction of the Trojan state, and prepare for the first great outburst of poetical inspiration which the world was to enjoy. After gazing on the splendour of the temple—after marking the different kinds of grandeur that were accumulated under his peaceful sway in the city of Jerusalem—after being led into the gorgeousness of his palatial life—we hear the monarch thus beginning, in words which could not but impress themselves the more strongly from all this brilliant contrast—"Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, vanity of vanities; all is vanity. What profit hath a man of all his labour which he taketh under the sun? One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh: but the earth abideth for ever. The sun also ariseth, and the sun goeth down, and hasteth to his place where he arose. The wind goeth toward the south, and turneth about unto the north; it whirleth about continually, and the wind returneth again according to his circuits. All the rivers run into the sea; yet the sea is not full; unto the place from whence the rivers come, thither they return again. All things are full of labour; man cannot utter it: the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing. The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun. Is there any thing whereof it may be said, See, this is new? it hath been already of old time, which was before us. There is no remembrance of former things; neither shall there be any remembrance of things that are to come with those that shall come after."

The disposition which would thus pour itself forth is not that of mere weariness, or of simple satiety—it is not that which labour sometimes feels in the daily return of its occupations, becoming irksome and intolerable from their monotony ; the disposition which one whose early days were trained in that severe school has described as sometimes accumulating upon him, until the going on in this daily course, in this ceaseless mill-work, became utterly impossible, and he felt obliged to burst from it at any rate and in any mode, however preposterous. It is not the satiety of idleness, not that weariness in which the return of day after day brings no interest, imposes no perceived obligation, and at last reduces the mind to such a state of restlessness, of discontent, of incapability of proceeding in this no-meaning, no-realising way, that even suicide has been perpetrated for a mere escape from it. It is not the feeling which comes over those who are obliged to spend long years in similar pursuits, in the accumulation of wealth like the merchant, or even in literary labour, where all the interest of history sometimes ceases to act upon the mind of him by whom it was recorded (as Hume, I think, has mentioned—he often felt how vain and empty were the speculations and inquiries about which he had just been so earnest—" What's Hecuba to him, or he to Hecuba?"—making it all, as the Preacher described, only vanity and vexation of spirit) —a weariness which they would be glad to lay down as a burden from sheer want of interest : a disposition which has reached sovereignty itself, leading some, like Christina of Sweden, to throw away the ceremonial round of royalty, in order to converse more freely with men of learning and acquirement ; and others, like Diocletian, to depart from the glittering round of imperial sovereignty, though it were merely to see what great cabbages they could grow in their gardens. Nor is it the sensation of the incompatibility of warfare with nature, the remorse of guilt, to which some writers have referred it. Lord Byron attempted to paraphrase this passage—the commencement of it, at least—and he has fallen into this gross mistake. His theory of Solomon is that of a man whose mind was clouded, was oppressed, with the stings of vain regret. He makes him exclaim :

"Fame, wisdom, love, and power were mine;
And health and youth possessed me;
My goblets blushed from every vine,
And lovely forms caressed me.
I sunned my heart in beauty's eyes,
And felt my soul grow tender;
All earth can give, or mortal prize,
Was mine of regal splendour.

I strive to number o'er what days
Remembrance can discover,
Which all that life or earth displays
Would lure me to live over.
There rose no day, there rolled no hour,
Of pleasure unembittered;
And not a trapping decked my power,
That galled not while it glittered.

The serpent of the field, by art
And spells, is won from harming;
But that which coils around the heart,
Oh! who hath power of charming?
It will not list to wisdom's lore,
Nor music's voice can lure it;
But there it stings for evermore
The soul that must endure it."

Nothing of this stinging do I find in the records of Ecclesiastes, no such emotions. There is a sense of the littleness, of the unworthiness, of the powers of the soul; but in this the conclusion is of a totally different description. Nor is there any of the supercilious vanity, the conceited questionings, real or affected, that have sometimes been uttered by those who affected to see in the world only one great blunder, and seemed to think their own powers and merits deserved a much higher sphere. Neither is there the darkness and gloom of Atheism. He does not look around on the world without a God. If there be chaos in his soul, it is the chaos which existed just before the Divine voice was about to say, "Let there be light, and there was light;" as it existed before the spirit of God brooded over the face of the waters, when that spirit was about to descend, and when the material of the world was preparing for its prompt organisation into harmony, beauty, order, and fertility.

The description I take to be that of a mind which has outgrown the circle in which circumstances have placed it—

which is beating against the bars of its present cage, that it may escape to an ampler sphere. Whatever of sorrow, of grief, or of vexation, is recorded here, they are but the pangs and throes of the spirit of humanity then travailing with the birth of an immortal hope. They mark the transition from the time when man's views were limited in this world to the things of time and of sense, to that period when he looked beyond the world, beyond time and sense, and felt himself the child of an everlasting God, who would endow him with immortality.

It is difficult to find passages of similar spirit and tendency in writers that approach more nearly to our own times and habits of thought. There is, however, some likeness between some of the matter which I have just read from Ecclesiastes, and a well-known passage of our own great dramatic bard. For instance, the 4th verse, "One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh: but the earth abideth for ever:" we may regard as an illustration of this verse, the language which Shakespeare has put into the mouth of Jaques, in the description of the "Seven Ages of Man." For the time, he regards life in that shadowy view of it which had presented itself to the mind of Solomon, but not with so deep a feeling. He abstains from questioning the *rationale* of all this—he strives not to solve the world's enigma—he is content to mark the superficial appearances, and to penetrate to the sense of humanity. With a kind of complacent smile, he runs over the different phases of men's existence—the mewling and puking child, the schoolboy with his shining face, the inditer of the love-lorn sonnet, the seeker of the bubble reputation, and so on, until he describes oblivion following and closing all. But still there is in all this no struggling with the great secret of human destiny. He marks one generation thus coming and thus passing away, and going through its successive stages; and he considers all the world a stage, and he is content that it should be so, and to play his own part out. He lets the world see that he knows its shows are pasteboard; and he agrees with humanity to play out the play, and to bring the scene to its appointed conclusion. He sees, as I said, one generation passing away, and another coming—he beholds the countless hosts of

humanity thus moving on—and he beats the time and sounds the music of their march, without seeking too curiously whence its hosts come, or whither they are going.

Of another portion of the passage—"The wind goeth toward the south, and turneth about unto the north: it whirleth about continually, and the wind returneth again according to his circuits"—of this kind of imagery, and in a spirit somewhat similar, although with a stronger sense of the transition and change then arising—there is an illustration in a living poet—I mean in the poem by Tennyson, entitled "Nothing will die," which begins in precisely the same tone of description:

"When will the stream be aweary of flowing
Under my eye?
When will the wind be aweary of blowing
Over the sky?
When will the clouds be aweary of fleeting?
When will the heart be aweary of beating?
And Nature die?
Never, oh, never! nothing will die;
The stream flows,
The wind blows,
The cloud fleets,
The heart beats;
Nothing will die.

Nothing will die;
All things will change
Through eternity.
'Tis the world's winter;
Autumn and summer
Are gone long ago.
Earth is dry to the centre;
But spring, a new comer—
A spring rich and strange—
Shall make the winds blow
Round and round,
Through and through,
Here and there,
Till the air
And the ground
Shall be filled with life anew.

The world was never made;
It will change, but it will not fade.

So let the wind range;
For even and morn
Ever will be
Through eternity.
Nothing was born;
Nothing will die;
All things will change."

And the diversity in the adoption of the imagery in the composition which I have just read, and the different way in which the feeling tends, and the different result to which it leads, give us an intimation of a fact which I believe to be a general fact—that whatever natural objects may be selected for the illustration of a mood of the human mind, if that mood be a false one, or if it be an imperfect one, such natural imagery will not answer the purpose of the illustration so well—the analogy will not be so entire, so complete, or so beautiful as it will be when applied to a state of mind which corresponds with the truth of our own nature and of the nature of things around us. I take the state in which Solomon lived to have been one necessarily transient in its nature—not to have been one which belongs essentially or permanently to our moral being, or to the moral being of the writer himself, or of any individual; and while the imagery which he employed will convey to us the state of moral feeling in which he then was, it is quite as well adapted to convey to us the illustration of a state of feeling that is more general, more permanent, more true, and more becoming the relative position of man in creation and under the providence of God: and in this way may we pursue the whole course of illustration in the passage which has been read.

"What profit hath a man of all his labour which he taketh under the sun?" Why, abundant profit; Solomon himself profited by the labours of his father, the heroic David—by labour which, in exile and privation, and through years of conflict and endurance, had raised him to the monarchy of Israel, and enabled him to lay the foundation of that grandeur which Solomon himself realised. He had profited by the labour of Moses, the great lawgiver—by the institutions which he founded, by the state of society which he had, as it were, created from one of slavery and of degradation—he was reaping the harvest of those who

had gone before: and was it for him to ask, What profit is there in labour? Was there not profit in his own labour? Did he not make his own name renowned through the world? Did he not make Jerusalem the joy, the pride, and the glory of the earth? Did he not raise the children of Israel from barbaric tribes into a people recognised by distant nations and extensive empires? Was there not profit in the labour that left us his collection of Proverbs, his Song of Songs, and even this description of the moral experiments of his own personal history? We have there the profit of his labour. And it is ever so. No true and honest labour is ever lost. Years may pass away, but the result will be found. "Cast thy bread upon the waters, and it shall be found again after many days." Thus it is that, under the heaviest disappointments and amid the darkest discouragements, the cause of truth and of humanity has ever been making its imperceptible advances. Churches have been founded by martyrs; reforms and revolutions have sprung from the blood shed upon the scaffold; and the works of literary genius, brought forth in pain and weariness and under hard endurance, have filled the world with high and beautiful and blessed thoughts and feelings. What profit is there in labour? Why, it is a profit only to labour. The man who labours is profiting from labour, for he is a man thereby—the powers of intellect developed that would else have been all weak and shrivelled up—the feelings of the heart expanded, that would else have never shown forth their liveliness, nor produced the gladness they impart—a whole being brought towards maturity, that might else have been poor, infirm, and worthless; and surely that is profit enough if man, the creature of God, realises by toil that which it is his duty and his destiny to be.

"One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh." Blessed be God that it is so. What would the world be, if it were the mere congregation of the aged, all contemporaries, with all their inveterate prejudices, and with no diversity around them to call them out and renew in them the springtide of their being? There is in all the works of God variety and diversity. In the immortal world this will doubtless be realised by some other mode; but here we have it in the fact of generation succeeding generation, by which man's progress in general is most

efficiently secured, and the tree of humanity stands all the more firm and lovely because we can behold at once the foliage, the fruit, and the opening blossom.

"The sun also ariseth, and the sun goeth down, and hasteth to his place where he arose." That is, the outgoings of the morning and of the evening rejoice in the sight of man, and utter forth music in the ear of God. So hath it been since the morning stars sang together, and the sons of God shouted for joy, as the evening and the morning made the first day of this our revolving world. How beautiful is light, with all the diversified colouring and brightness that it sheds over the face of creation! The sentiment has been repeated by millions and millions of voices from age to age; nor has the voice of the poet failed to exclaim also, How beautiful is light! Light and darkness are the matin and vesper song of creation, and both of them are an expression of worthy adoration of their Author. The rising of the morning, the returning of the sun every day, is more than a gratification to our senses, more than the exhibition of beauty and of glory. It is the earliest instruction in science. It was by the expectancy of this regular return that the mind was first led to trace the sequence of things. It was nature's first great picture-lesson of cause and effect, of regularity, of law, and of order, and of the sequence of nature, on which man founds all his discoveries, all his motives to persevere, all his sense of the connection of the present with the future, and his ability of realising the future in the present.

"The wind goeth toward the south, and turneth about unto the north; it whirleth about continually, and the wind returneth again according to his circuits." It does so eminently in countries where the course of the wind is regular sometimes for weeks and months together, facilitating as do the trade-winds the regular conveyance of articles of merchandise from one region to another, insuring the gratification of expectancy to those who are connected with objects of interest and affection at a distance, and giving navigation its first infantile training—that training by which it has been able to make the seas its highway, to command the powers of nature, to bind the winds and the waves to its own bidding. The wind has done well for man. It wafts his vessels, it grinds his corn, it dissipates

the pestilence—it is the earth's breathing, as it were; and when that breath is warm with the genial powers of spring, how nature exults in feeling it, and blooms and blushes in all the richness and radiance of its own colouring beneath the genial influence!

"All the rivers run into the sea; yet the sea is not full; unto the place from whence the rivers come, thither they return again." And in doing so they are not only the veins and arteries of this material globe, but they are also marks for the course of human improvement and testimonies to its advancement. The Nile, the ancient Nile, was the first great civiliser of mankind, and on its banks arose the pomp and pride and power of the world's first great empire. And whenever man goes forth to subdue the world and to replenish it, whenever he makes any advancement towards the accomplishment of his charter of dominion over the material globe, it is on the banks of rivers that he erects his first trophies of victory—it is there that his infant towns and cities arise—of them he makes the means of conveyance through distant countries. What would the immense region of America be without its rivers—those rivers which give to it the power of union, of art, of civilisation, of industry, and of commerce, and which are thus connected with all its growing greatness? And here, amongst ourselves, this Father Thames of ours, that for so many centuries has been flowing into the sea, although the sea be not full, and returning to the place whence it came, and renewing its course—who shall dare to say, or claim the name of Solomon for saying, that in all this there has been a mere vain circuit, an empty repetition of the same process? Do we not yet trace memorials of the time when this now populated region around it was a dreary waste, or marshy and swampy ground, where the savage with difficulty protected himself from the inclemency of the seasons in his wicker hut, or where the Roman threw up his fortress? From that age to this, how grand and glorious, how full of historical interest, is the story that might be told, showing that not in vain runs the river into the sea, and that, though it fills not the material ocean, it fills man's thoughts with a rich ocean of power, of association, and of glad expectancy!

"All things are full of labour; man cannot utter it: the

eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing." And if it had been satisfied, where should we have been? where would have been all the arts, where all the improvements that raise our condition so far above the savage? Where would man be, mentally and morally? One of the Hebrew writers speaks of that glad progression, in which "the feeble shall be as David, and David as the angel of the Lord." But if David had been contented with being David, and the feeble with being feeble, where would be the impulse, the energy, the first step of this everlasting progress, of this everlasting advancement? It is all in man's incapability of being satisfied with the finite, and ever pressing onwards towards the infinite.

"The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun. Is there any thing whereof it may be said, See, this is new? it hath been already of old time, which was before us. There is no remembrance of former things; neither shall there be any remembrance of things that are to come with those that shall come after." How much is worthy of remembrance in the mighty mass of things that are ever doomed thus early to pass away, who can tell? We are disqualified from judging of that matter; but we are sure there is a growing and extending connection of things which are secured from passing away, and which, if they be not new as to their production, are ever new and fresh in the stimulus which they give to humanity, and in the enjoyment which they afford; and, in our day, the mechanic, for his few shillings, may realise the remembrance of ancient things, and secure to himself an ampler and richer library than Solomon possessed in all the glories of his temple and of his palace.

The world's progression goes on. Solomon climbed to heights from which he lamented the limitation of the prospect. We stand on those to which he looked up, but around which mists and shadows were then brooding and darkening his vision; and still "Alps on Alps arise," calling upon us to go on upward and onward still—the call of Providence to the human race; and it is man's part to obey that call, assured that, when he is tempted to exclaim that all is vanity—when he most feels the littleness of

the things by which he is surrounded—his mind is then really preparing itself for that which is of larger compass and of a more enduring nature,—the process to be repeated again and again, until his being, according to the sublime expression of the apostle, is "filled unto all the fulness of God."

THE BOOK OF ECCLESIASTES.

No. II.

June 23d, 1839.

Your attention was last Sunday directed to the first eleven verses of the first chapter of the book of Ecclesiastes, for the writer's well-known and impressive description of the vanity of all things; his view of the heavens and of the earth, of the rivers and of the ocean, of the winds of heaven, of the productions of the soil, and of man himself, as running one ceaseless circle of vanity. In taking up the consideration of this extraordinary composition, I shall endeavour to carry you onwards from the point at which we then stopped, the eleventh verse of the first chapter, to the eleventh verse of the second chapter—a passage which will not require much minute attention to the phraseology of the different verses, but which I shall endeavour to elucidate by some previous remarks.

The passage that has been already considered exhibits Solomon, in his disappointment, as arraigning the order of nature,—as, by implication at least, censuring the course of Providence,—as endeavouring to affix the brand of vanity upon all created things. This we regard as the description of a state or mood of his mind; and it is followed by one in which the censure is transferred from things external to things internal, from the world to himself, from the influences which tend to vexation of spirit to the vexed spirit itself, where the failure, the weariness, which in the one instance appear to be charged upon the heaven and the earth, in the other are brought home to his own mind and heart. That these two states should succeed one another is in the natural course and order of things; it is a transition that continually presents itself to us in the history of humanity. Human nature often commences its career in the world alike

in ignorance of the world and of itself. The world of the young is often a most unreal scene: they surround their future course, in imagination, with whatever their disposition leads them to select; they expect all things to be holding on according to their desires, and for their gratification, in accordance with the fanciful building up of a baseless fabric in their minds; with them, the course of love is to run smooth—their pursuits are to realise whatever they wish to command of that which constitutes external good in the world's apprehension; mankind, they believe, will be ever flexible, persuasible, obedient to their dictates,—they are to bring truth home by the conviction of their arguments,—they are to induce particular modes of action by the fascination of their persuasion; and generally it happens that, in the anticipations which they cherish of the future, large allowance is made for those rare coincidences, those felicitous combinations, which only occur at wide intervals in the records of life. Starting in such a way, what can humanity experience but disappointment? How soon must that disappointment be brought home to the soul! and how common is the consequence of imputing this, either in words or in thoughts, perhaps unconsciously, as a blame to the system of creation! Sometimes this is expressed openly. There have been writers in our own day who have spoken of the world as nothing more than a glorious blunder—who have plainly intimated that they would have constructed it, with man, its noblest inhabitant, and society, which best developes the power of man, on other principles, and with more fortunate and happier results: and while this impression is open and undisguised on the part of some, with others it is latent, but yet distinctly conveyed, as in the passage with which Solomon commences the book of Ecclesiastes; and in other cases it takes the form of a demoniacal system of theology, of doctrines which place the world under the wrath and curse of God, which behold creation under the operation of Divine punishment or vengeance, which make the earth only the dark portal of the infernal regions, and spread a lurid cloud over all things, under the pretence of making this world a portion of a scheme which exists only in the imagination of the schemers, and comports neither with the manifest aspect of creation, nor with the tendencies of the Providential government.

But in all these cases there is, whether it be expressed or not, a dissatisfaction with the Divine government—there is the feeling which Solomon has conveyed in his declaration that all is vanity—there is a mental rebellion; and, though it may assume the mask of piety, though it may shape itself—as in the case just adverted to it does shape itself—into a system of theology, and claim a high and peculiar standing as religion, still, in all this manifestation of the spirit of discontent, we may believe that they would say, with Job's wife, "Curse God, and die," if they dared to speak out.

But, as in the particular instance of Solomon, so in the ordinary course of things, there is a tendency for that state of mind to pass into another. It begins to be suspected that the world within may not be perfectly framed, any more than the world without—that if there be a glorious blunder in the universe, there may be a blunder, perhaps inglorious, in the mind by which it is contemplated, and which has failed to derive from it the desired and anticipated amount of good. Then man begins, as he believes, to strip off the delusion by which he has been taken in,—he entertains doubts of his former deities, whether they wear the form of divines or of philosophers,—he looks upon the system without as harmonising, in what he now deems its worthlessness, with that within,—he adopts for himself the cold inscription on the tomb of one of our poets:

> "Life is a jest—all things show it:
> I thought so once—now I know it,"—

he claims the same origin for his own mistakes, as for those which he beholds traced around him,—he appeals to the arrangements of the Deity as the source of his own errors, and says: "That which is crooked cannot be made straight: and that which is wanting cannot be numbered;"—and if he pursues the train of thought to its ultimate results, he concludes that life itself is but, as it were, a sort of darkness, —there is error within, as there is error without,—and that all is one mass of confusion, leading only to despondency.

Into something like this mood the royal preacher's mind seems—not in the passage which immediately follows that which I have quoted, but in the commencement of the second chapter—to have fallen. We seem to behold

the wreck of a soul, and to hear it repeating to age after age the wailings of its wretchedness and the confession of its blunders; we see something that might aptly be compared, perhaps, to the fate of some of his own vessels, when the enterprising monarch, who commanded the products of so many hills and woods, built for Judæa a fleet, and gave her—what she never had before—commercial interests and maritime adventure. The fleet left the friendly port of Tyre or Sidon, the lion of Judah emblazoned on its banner. Guided by Phœnician skill, it sought the far land of Ophir and of Tarshish, to barter the goods which it carried for various products of nature or of art. It returns stemming triumphantly the waves, and borne along by the winds; and at last, perhaps, in sight of port, it strikes upon a rock, it remains there fixed and fast, its crew perishes; its bravery and all its trim and tackle are scattered by the winds; its accumulated and costly cargo goes to enrich the caverns of the deep; the waves beat upon it ceaselessly, and there it remains, a beacon and a warning: the mariner beholds it, and steers his vessel afar off; the sea-birds scream around it, and every night-wind renews its dirge of desolation. Thus sound the complainings of the book of Ecclesiastes. But between these two states of mind there is a transition, which is described in the conclusion of the first chapter. Taking it up from the point at which he has described all nature as a ceaseless round of vanity, he goes on thus, endeavouring to reconcile himself, to justify himself, as it were—for such is the course of thought in this part of it—to justify himself by the vanity and crookedness of external things. This is a state which intervenes between that of the mere accusation of the order of Providence, and that of self-accusation and condemnation. "I the Preacher was king over Israel in Jerusalem. And I gave my heart to seek and search out by wisdom concerning all things that are done under heaven: this sore travail hath God given to the sons of man to be exercised therewith. I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and, behold, all is vanity and vexation of spirit. That which is crooked cannot be made straight: and that which is wanting cannot be numbered." That is, there is an inherent imperfection in external things, with which it is in vain for the spirit of man to strive, whatever may be its wisdom or its

power; and in the verse which I last read, the 15th verse, "That which is crooked cannot be made straight: and that which is wanting cannot be numbered," we have, as it were, an epitome of the feeling which disappointed men, who would not take on themselves the blame of their disappointments, have, in the greatest diversity, endeavoured to throw upon Providence. For instance, when the dying Brutus exclaimed that in the worship of virtue, which had spread over his stoical life, he had only adored a name,—when Lucan, alluding to the civil war of the Romans, which ended in their subjugation to imperial tyranny, said that the victorious cause pleased the gods, but the vanquished cause pleased Cato,—they both adopted the sentiment which is substantially the same as that which I have just read; they both imputed to humanity, to their country, to the condition of things, and to the course of events, a crookedness which it was not in the power of human wisdom or human virtue altogether to redress. But this was an unfounded imputation; it was one which should have recoiled on the individuals. Who and what were they, the last of the Roman patriots though they were—who and what was that little band of illustrious individuals—but a forlorn hope for the then defunct aristocratical republic of Rome? The time was gone by when the particular system which they idealised and idolised could ever flourish again in the city of the Seven Hills. It was not in the course of things that man should not be influenced by institutions—it was not in the order of nature that a selfish aristocracy, which had long oppressed the multitude, should gain its credence, and win its faith and soul, and be able to lead it on in resistance to a single despotism. The course of past events had been to degrade the multitudes of the Romans, to render them more accessible to an individual who, like Cæsar, would promise them temporary largesses, than to those who, representing the national greatness of their country, represented also its austerity, its pride, its harshness, and all that belonged to the mischiefs of its patrician domination. It is for the world's well-being that institutions should form characters, and that nations should be emancipated, not by a few heroic individuals, but by the prevalence of intelligence, by public wisdom, and by public virtue; only thus can freedom be the heritage of which they enter into permanent possession.

Perhaps some feeling of this sort may have occurred to the mind of the great conqueror of modern days, under his disasters and defeats. If we take the lines in which Lord Byron has endeavoured to depict the feelings of Napoleon,—they are such as might have been expressed in the language which I have just read,—when he makes him say:

> "Farewell to thee, France!—when thy diadem crowned me,
> I made thee the gem and the wonder of earth:
> But thy weakness decrees I should leave as I found thee,
> Decayed in thy glory, and sunk in thy worth,"—

what does it all mean, but an accusation in his heart against the people of France? "that which is crooked cannot be made straight: and that which is wanting cannot be numbered." And it is for the good of mankind that universal domination should be impracticable, that it should not be in the power of numerous armies and of martial skill to subjugate nations, and to throw down the demarcations by which people are divided, and to compress all tongues and associations and institutions into one great, unbounded, dead mass of subordination. "Thy weakness decrees." It was his mistaken policy that decreed the weakness of France, when he might have decreed its strength. But the policy that might have decreed its strength, could not have made the blunder of expecting that the valour of freemen battling for the right would be preserved in those who were led into indefinite schemes of conquest; it would not have been a policy of aggression or of domination: it would have been peaceful, not warlike; founded upon human rights, and not upon individual aggrandisement.

The worst effect of this view of things, of thus attributing imperfection to the order of events, to the laws of the material and of the moral world, in order to justify the individual to himself, is produced when the mind is led to conform itself to the apparent crookedness of the course of nature—when it says, As "that which is crooked cannot be made straight," let my soul take the flexure also, let it bend itself to that irregular line; as "that which is wanting cannot be numbered," let me partake in the deficiency: why should I aim at vain perfection, and isolate myself from my fellow-creatures, and from a conformity with the common course of events under the direction of Providence? Thus, in such a man as Paracelsus, when the world turns

a deaf ear to his real wisdom, when it treats his just pretensions with disdain and scorn, when it calls him a quack where most he deserved its respect and its gratitude,—why, it holds the temptation to his mind to become that which he is thought to be,—to say, If my wisdom is disregarded, I will keep it to myself—if they prize the tinsel and the glitter above the solid ore, I will exhibit to them the tinsel and the glitter—they shall have the little petty tricks which they require—they shall be amused and amazed, if they will not be instructed—I will be great in the way which they regard as greatness—as I cannot straighten their crookedness, I will excel them in their own crookedness—and, as they will not pay for the metal, let them pay for the glitter of its counterfeit.

Something of this sort most likely passed in the minds of the founders of religions and of sects in ancient times; and the temptation must have been common to them all. One deflexion of the character of Mahomet may be supposed to have occurred in this manner. He spends years, long years, instructing the ignorant, pursuing the truth. He makes two, three, four converts, slowly and with immense difficulty. He becomes weary of this; he says, My religion is the true religion; but this is not the way, seemingly, in which it can ever be established in the world; they want signs, and wonders, and miracles, and power; and they shall have them. Look, ye unbelievers! I will divide the moon; I will remove the mountain; I have ascended into heaven; I have seen the tree of paradise, the golden fruit that grows in the garden of God; I have plucked a feather from the wing of the angel Gabriel, and written therewith the unparallelled poetry of the Koran. You shall have signs and wonders, and you shall have power. Gird on your swords; assail the enemies of the Deity and of his messengers. On to the battle! fight for the true and the right, for victory, for splendour, for the glorious triumph of the true religion! Forward! Great is Allah, and Mahomet is his prophet!

And have we not in other forms, but in perfectly analogous matters, mental operations of this sort continually going on amongst ourselves—a conformity with the world's crookedness under self-justifying pretexts? Does not the man of literature say, What are others' thoughts worth to

me, true, deep, lasting although they be? My weighty thoughts will find little acceptance from a trade and a public that requires only abundance of light reading. Let me minister to the taste that prevails; let me quench the spirit that is in me, and suppress the prophesyings that I could pour forth; "that which is crooked cannot be made straight" by the little right line I could append to it; let me go on in the world's curve, and let it work itself right and straight when Heaven and Providence will that it should be so. And so the politician says, I know this will not abide the test of abstract principle, I know this is not embodying the spirit of the institutions by which we profess the country should be governed; but will the people bear that? Look at the classes and interests on every side; there is an essential crookedness in the land, there is a defect we cannot cure; and so let us bend to that which exists, tell as much truth as humanity will bear, and leave our successors to complete a work which perhaps has been rendered tenfold more difficult by this crooked process. The tradesman bends his mind, in like manner, to the common tricks of his occupation: It is the world's custom, it is not exactly right, it is not that which one would prefer, one would not choose such a state of things; but we must do as others do, and make way according to those laws and customs which prevail in the commercial world. And even moralists and divines fall into the same trap,—they employ phraseology, especially the phraseology of scripture, in a way different from that in which it is accepted by others; and thus maintain a hollow semblance, which is nothing but keeping up a crooked way of teaching righteousness. It is a false justification; it is one which eventually must recoil upon the individual: for if the spirit of man retains its integrity, though there may be a sacrifice of present advantage, and of much that the individual would gladly realise, it is by such sacrifice that his strength is confirmed, and his influence for good immeasurably increased. The real victory of things evil, be it short or be it long, is not in the strength of the wrong, but in the cowardice of those who hold the right.

We now come to the Royal Preacher's account of his experiments on happiness. He made them, it may be observed, under the most flattering circumstances. His

regal station—his unbounded wealth—the long reign of peace, scarcely at all interrupted by the sound of war, and that more like a triumphal march than a real conflict, during which he swayed the sceptre of Israel—his communication with other countries, from which the Jewish people had been completely cut off—the respect which was paid to him by the most renowned personages of different and of distant nations, and his residence in a country where the purest theology and morality that the world then knew were taught,—these were all means and appliances that might lead us to expect he would solve the problem of happiness if any one could, and at least they impart a high degree of value to his recorded experience. The passage which I am now about to read begins at the sixteenth verse of the first chapter, and goes to the eleventh verse of the second chapter:

"I communed with mine own heart, saying, Lo, I am come to great estate, and have gotten more wisdom than all they that have been before me in Jerusalem: yea, my heart had great experience of wisdom and knowledge. And I gave my heart to know wisdom, and to know madness and folly: I perceived that this also is vexation of spirit. For in much wisdom is much grief: and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow. I said in mine heart, Go to now, I will prove thee with mirth, therefore enjoy pleasure: and, behold, this also is vanity. I said of laughter, It is mad: and of mirth, What doeth it? I sought in mine heart to give myself unto wine, yet acquainting mine heart with wisdom; and to lay hold on folly, till I might see what was that good for the sons of men, which they should do under the heaven all the days of their life. I made me great works; I builded me houses; I planted me vineyards: I made me gardens and orchards, and I planted trees in them of all kind of fruits: I made me pools of water, to water therewith the wood that bringeth forth trees: I got me servants and maidens, and had servants born in my house; also I had great possessions of great and small cattle above all that were in Jerusalem before me: I gathered me also silver and gold, and the peculiar treasure of kings and of the provinces: I gat me men singers and women singers, and the delights of the sons of men, as musical instruments, and that of all sorts. So I was great, and increased more

than all that were before me in Jerusalem: also my wisdom remained with me. And whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not from them, I withheld not my heart from any joy; for my heart rejoiced in all my labour: and this was my portion of all my labour. Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labour that I had laboured to do: and, behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun."

He tried, and he tried well; he tried the serious and the gay; he tried power and pomp; he had recourse even to the abounding resources of art; and all was insufficient. And why did it not suffice? The love of knowledge has often been a ruling passion, strong over the faculties and the life of man. It should be so in its own nature. It is a grand task to trace the simplicity of broad principles—to behold, as in a noble architecture, the lofty framework of knowledge; it is grand to have the mind reflecting, as it were, the works of God in itself—becoming a microcosm, a little world, where one may see the movements and tendencies of external things, as we behold the motions of the planetary system in an orrery. This has been in men so strong that it has deadened them to external sensations; they have pursued their calculations amid the din of siege or battle, and gone on unconscious of what was around till they perished in their studies. Why should not these things suffice? Why should not the pleasure which he tried suffice?—exhilaration and amusement, graced over, as he himself tells us, by intellectuality. The mantling of the wine-cup gave its lustre to the song of the bard—sparkling in wit, it flowed in poetry; the symposium of Solomon might have been like that of the ancient Greeks, in which they sometimes met death itself with smiles—like those feasts where the cup and the song went round, and where even the skeleton itself, that was sometimes introduced into the banqueting-halls, was crowned with its wreath of roses. Why should not grandeur, pomp, wealth suffice? They are an ample possession. We find that he made himself gardens, bringing the beauties of nature into harmonious arrangement, as it were, almost in despite of the obstacles of nature. He dug in the rock itself pools in which streams of water were to flow, and accumulated there the rich soil in which the flowers and trees were to put

forth their variegated beauties. The pillars of his palace were hewn of the cedar of Lebanon, and its ornaments were carved with all the skill that the age afforded. And why should not art suffice,—art, which may embody the grandest conceptions and the deepest feelings, which makes even buildings speak to us with a voice of wisdom and of poetry—which peoples them with marble forms, majestic in their proportions, and lovely in their symmetry—which reflects from the canvas the colouring by which nature's face is so attractive and delightful to those by whom it is contemplated—and which, in the power of music, can give vent to the most elementary and the most complex emotions of the human soul, and can either melt the listener to tears, or wrap the impassioned spirit in elysium? Why would not these suffice for Solomon? For two reasons, I apprehend—two reasons, which so blend that one cannot pursue them separately; they are best taken conjointly—for two reasons, one of which was in the objects themselves, and the other of which was in Solomon himself—one in the selection of objects, the other in the mode in which they were pursued; for, look at the list: is there not a fatal omission? He provides for the gratification of the intellect—he provides for the gratification of the senses—he provides for the gratification of the ambitious and aspiring tendencies of human nature—he provides for the gratification of the feeling of artistic beauty and the appreciation of its loveliness; but he does not provide for human affection, for that love in man's heart which is the soul of man, of character, of happiness, of religion, of all that makes his being what the Creator designed it to be. This alone, this human affection, is objectless in Solomon's enumeration; and without this, intellect would shrivel up in its acquirement of knowledge, the wine-cup would become the mere minister to sensuality, the pomp that was around him would be unmeaning and worthless, and art itself would lose that spirit by which it becomes the minister to the purest and best enjoyments, and to the strongest emotions, of the human soul. This is one reason—in the objects. The other is, that, in all this pursuit of things, Solomon appears under the influence of a strong consciousness of self. It was around him that these things were to gather—it was to him that all these things were to

be tributary—it was his science by which nature's productions were known, from the cedar of Lebanon to the hyssop that springeth out of the wall; he seems to have thought much less of what they were, than of what he was in knowing them, and in learnedly discoursing on their qualities. In every enjoyment of social hilarity we find the same consciousness; when he smiles, he knows that he smiles, and he says, "of laughter, It is mad: and of mirth, What doeth it?" In looking around him on the palace and gardens, he remembers that they had been formed at vast expense and by immense toil. He would have loved better the wild and wide forest, or the uncultured field, and the flowers that grow there spontaneously, if his heart had really been touched by these productions of nature; for much more graceful, much more attractive to the real lover of nature, must they be, than any artificially constructed terraces, where rocks had been blasted to make room for beds of flowers, and where every thing must have reminded the observer more of the power by which these were constructed than of the beautiful result which they served to realise. And so, when he speaks of the power of art, of his enjoyment of music, he merely mentions men singers and women singers as he would have mentioned any unconscious instruments—as he would have told us of the spade and the hammer and the hatchet by which the walls of his temple had been raised, or his pillars and gardens prepared. He seems to have thought no more of them, or of their taste and genius, than as of so many implements by which he was surrounded. This self-consciousness was shown in his early youth; and it is all self through all his accumulations of wisdom and of art. While yet comparatively a child, he prayed for wisdom; and so thoroughly was his mind bent on its acquisition, that he dreamt the Deity came and promised him he should have all wisdom, and surpass all that had gone before him on the throne of Judæa, or on any other throne in the world. And so in his prayer at the dedication of the temple, while many magnificent ideas of the Deity are displayed, still the burden of it is, "this house which I have builded." He does not say with Nebuchadnezzar, "Is not this great Babylon that I have built for the house of the kingdom, by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?" but there is only a trifling

difference, if any, between that, and "this house which I, Solomon, have builded for the glory of Jehovah."

No wonder that these things did not suffice for him. What should suffice for him, but that which would suffice for the meanest slave that toiled in these his grand works—for the most laborious hewer of wood and drawer of water that was employed in this stately and expensive construction—for one of the tens of thousands, or hundreds of thousands, of unhappy foreigners who were compelled to go through the work of their captivity, raising a building for the worship of a God towards whose sanctuary they were not to be permitted to approach, into whose inner court their profane feet were never to be allowed to enter? That which would have constituted his happiness, would have constituted theirs also. In mere knowledge or wisdom, the mind of man is as a reflection of the world from without, where its forms may be seen with diminished splendour, as the stars of heaven may be traced on the surface of a pool; but, when the heart is full of love, it casts its own light upon the external world, and then every object of natural science or of natural truth, then every ministration of art, becomes imbued with new loveliness, and is a ministration from God for good to the soul of the individual. Oh, how different was the feeling of Christ! Though he spake not of the cedar of Lebanon, nor of all the ranks and classes of plants from that to the hyssop that springeth out of the wall, how different was his feeling when he looked complacently—ay, fondly—upon the wild lilies of the field, and declared that Solomon in all his glory was never arrayed like these! How different, indeed, was his feeling through all his life! He never communed, as tradition asserts that Solomon communed, with the demons and spirits of the elements; but in truth did angels hymn the birth of the child of Bethlehem, and minister to the agonies of the garden of Gethsemane. And that judgment of Christ, that gentle admonition which so often has reached the erring heart, "Go, and sin no more," is worth thousands and millions of instances of such cold keenness as was shown in the celebrated judgment of Solomon, where all his wisdom could divine no better mode of distinguishing between the genuine feelings of maternity and the claim of sordid imposture, than by the rude and

rough expedient of threatening the life of an unconscious infant.

It is no wonder there should be the failure he has described. The principle to which I have adverted would have made universal success, instead of universal failure. This we may trace as we proceed in the exposition of the book of Ecclesiastes. I will only add now, that the state I have been describing could not be the last phase of so mighty a mind as that of Solomon undoubtedly was. There must be something to come after; and I think there are indications, and these not few or obscure, in this book of a state of mind that did come after, of some revival, of some inbeaming of light upon that darkened spirit. The pangs of remorse, of passionate remorse, such as those expressed in the prayer of Manasseh, or in some of the psalms of David—the striving with God in agonising penitence, the outcrying for mercy—

> "Mercy, good Lord, mercy I ask,—
> This is the total sum;
> For mercy, Lord, is all my plea,—
> Oh, let thy mercy come"—

the death-and-life conflict—the conflict, as it were, of the mind with the Divine attributes—the gasping of the soul like "the cry of some strong swimmer in his agony"—all these could not take place in the experience of an intellect so clear, so large as that of Solomon. And it would be not through this tempest of feeling, but through his intelligence, that any thing like a revival would come to his spirit—it would be through the intellect that life and light would dawn upon him, and his withered heart renew its freshness; and if, as we believe, this further change, this ultimate rest of the spirit, or tendency towards a rest of the spirit, is to be found in his works, in the book before us, why, then, instead of the similitude which, at the commencement of this lecture, I borrowed from the supposed wreck of one of his own ships returning from Ophir or Tarshish, we may regard it as finally escaping from its perils, and may compare the book of Ecclesiastes to the supposed remains of the ark of the patriarch that survived the flood. The ark, it was believed, long rested upon Ararat after having careered over the vast scene of a world's desolation—there it touched

the ground, and there it remained, while Noah and his family descended to replenish the earth. Its weak and fragile timbers were said to be seen there from age to age, as if they had become one with the eternal granite on which they rested. There they abode, the rainbow of heaven over them, and at the base of the mountain fruitful fields extending themselves, and populous cities arising; while ever and anon the inhabitant or the traveller would look up to that lofty site, would see the remnants there, and would regard them as an altar of gratitude to God, and as a memorial and a promise of deliverance for humanity.

THE BOOK OF ECCLESIASTES.

No. III.

June 30th, 1839.

In the preceding portion of this book, three different moods of the mind of its royal author have been delineated. First, his weariness with the external course of nature; his denunciation, as it were, of the whole creation for its vanity; his description of it as a profitless, yet continuous movement—a never-ending whirlpool, where the rivers supply their own fountains, in order to flow again to the sea, and again to supply their fountains; and where the winds pursue their course, blowing to the south, and whirling about to the north; and with this process continuing in the generations of man,—one passing away, and another coming,—till from all the eye turns, the feelings recoil, the heart sickens, and the mind can only arrive at the conclusion that, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity." This description occupies the first eleven verses of the first chapter. The next state of mind, which we find in the four verses that follow, is that which not unnaturally succeeds to the other—that at which human nature has often arrived—and which it is especially prone to arrive at after its early disappointments; in which a sort of self-justification is made out by a distorted view of the course of nature and of Providence—a view which throws upon them the crookedness, the imperfection, the fault, which is really in the individual—that state in which man either professes altogether to throw up the pursuit of happiness, or in which he palliates or justifies his adoption of the means of imposing upon his fellow-creatures, of rising to power upon their weakness, of amassing wealth by plundering their property, of accommodating himself to what he deems and knows to be their prejudices, debasing himself in his own eye in order to aggrandise himself in theirs,

and thus making, either by the demonstration of the necessity of his suffering or by the excuse of his moral obliquity, the allegation that nature itself is, as it were, out of joint—that the established course of things renders all struggles vain—for "that which is crooked cannot be made straight: and that which is wanting cannot be numbered." The third portion of the book, which has been already expounded, is from the fifteenth verse of the first chapter to the eleventh verse of the second chapter inclusive: and here come the confessions of the moral experimentalist—the confession of his having been foiled in a number of diversified attempts to realise the greatest good for his being; the description of how he had tried wisdom, and that would not do, and how he had tried folly, and that would not do either; how he amassed wealth and grandeur, in order to find this great good of humanity in pomp and state, in the show which dazzles men's eyes, but which never reaches their hearts; and then how he tried to find it in artistical resources—in surrounding himself with those who could produce the stately pile, or the harmonious combination of sound, or the grandeur of the painter's or the sculptor's art. Solomon continues his confession, so as within a small compass to exhibit to us that unsatisfying round of being through which humanity runs, while it continues unaware that in the human heart, and not in external things, nor even in the mere operation of the intellect, is to be found the true fountain of blessedness.

The confessions which are thus made have a dark and a bitter character, but by no means the darkest and bitterest that had to find their expression in this peculiar composition. Another thought now comes in—it is introduced at the point at which our present exposition commences—a thought hitherto untouched, except by a very cold and distant allusion, which leaves it without any operation on the imagination or the feelings; but which, from the mode in which it is introduced, must needs give its character to, and assert its power over, the entire spirit of the composition: that new thought is Death. The evils, the struggles, the repinings, and the bitterness of the earlier part of the work, are those of the living man—are those which may be experienced, which continually are experienced, by those who manage to forget death—who go

on accumulating property, climbing the ladder of ambition, or busying themselves about the concerns of others, or gratulating themselves upon their own state, without any thought of the termination to which all this must come—who are going on individually as the human race is described by one of the sacred writers to have gone on in the mass on the eve of the Flood—they were eating and drinking, building houses, planting vineyards, marrying and giving in marriage, forming their modes of government or polity, or going through the offices of religion—all thoughtlessly taking their course, whether singly, according to their individual pursuits and dispositions, or collectively, in the great and multitudinous mass, until the Flood came upon them with its desolating waters, and at once stopped all these varied occupations, and buried them in a common oblivion. And that which is commented on as having happened then with the whole human race, continually happens with individuals. Nothing is more common than for us to witness that absorption, that entire absorption, whether it be in the question of what they shall eat, or what they shall drink, or wherewith they shall be clothed; or in higher pursuits than these—in intellectual calculations and analyses, or in the affairs of state, or in the course of business—business pursued as a needful occupation for procuring a subsistence—nothing is more common than for us to see persons so absorbed in one or other of these, that the notion of death never seems to occur to their minds; they go on and on, as if, according to the language of Solomon, that which hath been, is that which yet shall be, and the sun will still rise and still set on these little scenes of paltry bustle, even to all eternity. When the thought of death does occur, when it is really brought home to the mind, to the imagination, to the feelings of those who have been thus absorbed, it is very apt to become itself in turn an absorbing thought. Death advances into the mind like a monarch; and once the invasion successful, the entrance effected, he erects his throne there, and perhaps gives a new colouring to the whole of after-life. Such a new and darker colouring is induced in this book by the introduction of the idea, and it is true to nature. There is an illustration of this action in one of the productions of that peerless commentator upon

nature, our own great dramatic writer. In tracing the course of Richard the Second, we find, about the middle of the historical drama, that this same thought of death, this same perception of his tremendous power, lays hold, through the imagination, upon the gay, buoyant, thoughtless monarch. It is forced upon him, and it wrings from him perhaps the noblest personification of death that exists in our language —a personification which seems almost to make him a king of kings and a lord of lords in this our lower world:

> "For within the hollow crown,
> That rounds the mortal temples of a king,
> Keeps death his court: and there the antic sits,
> Scoffing his state, and grinning at his pomp;
> Allowing him a breath, a little scene
> To monarchise, be feared, and kill with looks;
> Infusing him with self and vain conceit,—
> As if this flesh, which walls about our life,
> Were brass impregnable;—and, humoured thus,
> Comes at the last, and with a little pin
> Bores through his castle-wall, and—farewell, king!"

The thought thus introduced keeps possession of the composition in that case as in this; and we no longer see in Richard the gay and bounding spirit, the lordly disposition, the pomp that presided in the assembled tournament, that dispensed death here and banishment there, that killed and that made alive, that revelled through scenes of private joyance as well as of public splendour, that was adorned with the laurels of conquest, that kept its state right royally: it now felt its own abasement before that grim and antic royalty which is here described as surmounting the diadem of earthly power; from this time his talk is of "graves, of worms, and epitaphs."

And perhaps if we take the illustration, not of philosophical poetry, but of history, of well-known biography, it may be a conceivable theory that this same notion was first realised by Archbishop Cranmer when he was thrown into prison in the time of Queen Mary. Cranmer was a theologian, trained to it from his youth; but he had never realised death in his soul. He had read of it in homilies, he had preached of it; he had found—for he was a student of the fathers and of the scriptures—he had found how important was its place in the routine of theological

instruction; he had traced its influence on the affairs of life; he had made himself a casuist, and gone over the most knotty points of casuistry with satisfaction to royal consciences, and thus wrought his own advancement; he had made his way from the lower degrees of the priesthood to the higher; he had become an agent in the work, so called, of the Reformation; he had planned creeds and articles, and the reconstruction of mass-books into prayer-books; he had attended to the policy of the country, and directed it with a view to those religious interests which were then beginning to divide all Europe; he had aided two monarchs in succession in the exercise of their mighty powers; he had been himself a persecutor, and had destined others to the dungeon and to the stake;—and it is very possible that a man might do all this, and yet never realise the notion of his own death—it is very possible that a man might do all this, and yet, when there came before him a decree by which his own body should forthwith be given to the flames, that he might shrink from that reality now first impressed upon him in all its strong and lively and glaring colours, and that he might do the deed which has formed ever since a blot on Cranmer's fame—that he might endeavour to sign away his immortal soul to escape the stern and black reality; and some theory of this sort does seem absolutely necessary to account for the apostasy, the cowardly apostasy, of the first Protestant primate of this great country. If so, the evil became its own remedy. The notion of death, once vividly conceived, remained with him, and the consequence was that the first influence was reversed, —and, realised intently in all its bearings, as well as in the first appalling view, cowardice passed away into courage, death was swallowed up in victory; the recanting primate again recanted—he returned to the dictates of his own conscience, the truth that was recognised in his own mind, and laid down his archiepiscopal dignities to perish a martyr at the stake.

Not that, in commenting upon the general unwillingness to entertain the notion of death, I would at all represent as more reasonable or more desirable the way in which some religionists endeavour to keep death always before them; because it is not in the mere physical or conventional contemplation of the great change of this living

frame to a senseless mass of earth, the prey of corruption—it is not so that the imagination best performs its functions, and that the conception itself best bears its fruits. It is scarcely an atom wiser than the other plan, if it be so wise, to live in a cell, with a crucifix and a skull always in contemplation. A man does not grapple with the idea of death, or gain the mastery over it, or find its proper place, by wearing a shroud instead of a shirt, or by lying down to take his rest in a coffin. It is in a much deeper penetration into the nature and essence of the change that the real wisdom consists, and this is merely a childish adding to mental horror of the attributes of physical horror.

But we will now proceed to trace its influence on the mind of Solomon. We still find him adverting to self—wise, but in his own wisdom, and great in his own grandeur. Nor is it strange that this should mingle with his contemplation of what seemed the approaching annihilation of all. Indeed, this is an aggravation of the great catastrophe. "I turned myself to behold wisdom, and madness, and folly: for what can the man do that cometh after the king? even that which hath been already done. Then I saw that wisdom excelleth folly, as far as light excelleth darkness." Here is a sentiment, which the appreciation of his own wisdom introduces, somewhat in incongruity with the general tendency of this part of the work to represent all as vanity; but immediately on this follows the recoil, and there comes in the notion of death. "The wise man's eyes are in his head; but the fool walketh in darkness: and I myself perceived also that one event happeneth to them all. Then said I in my heart, As it happeneth to the fool, so it happeneth even to me;"—all distinctions, all supremacy, down they go;—"and why was I then more wise? Then I said in my heart, that this also is vanity." It would not have been vanity if the wisdom had expanded into a wider circle, and if it had sunk down into the heart in the form of feeling. It was the self-centring of all, the centring of that self which by no means represents the noblest portion of us, that created this form of vanity. However, on this he continues to dwell—the one oblivion which is to pass over all; and death is hateful to him on account of that oblivion. "For there is no remembrance of the wise more than of the fool for ever; seeing that which now is in the days to

come shall all be forgotten. And how dieth the wise man? as the fool. Therefore I hated life"—the recoil from this annihilation spreads itself over the very sense of existence, and it spreads itself also beyond that, and higher than even the mountains of his own exertion and of his own greatness; it makes him hate his own accumulation of wisdom;—"Therefore I hated life; because the work that is wrought under the sun is grievous unto me: for all is vanity and vexation of spirit. Yea, I hated all my labour which I had taken under the sun: because I should leave it unto the man that shall be after me. And who knoweth whether he shall be a wise man or a fool? yet shall he have rule over all my labour wherein I have laboured, and wherein I have showed myself wise under the sun. This is also vanity." Such vanity did it seem to him, this leaving the fruit of his own intellectual researches as well as of his own political greatness to a successor who might be such as chance should determine, that he actually put forth efforts to make himself more gloomy and bitter in the anticipation. "Therefore I went about to cause my heart to despair of all the labour which I took under the sun. For there is a man whose labour is in wisdom, and in knowledge, and in equity; yet to a man that hath not laboured therein shall he leave it for his portion. This also is vanity and a great evil." The mind of the writer seems to have no conception of that spiritual condition in which all these attainments and acquirements would be enough for themselves and of themselves—in which there would be no solicitude about the man that should come after him, or whether he were a wise man or a fool—but wherein the thing itself would feed and nourish itself, and be its own light and life. "For what hath man of all his labour, and of the vexation of his heart, wherein he hath laboured under the sun? For all his days are sorrows, and his travail grief: yea, his heart taketh not rest in the night. This is also vanity." But it is not vanity when a man's work is a simple utterance, a going forth without of that which exists within, in all its truth, its freshness, and its brightness. It is not vanity when the eye perceives beauty, and is glad therein; when the ear hears melody, and rejoices therein; when our senses appeal in their beneficent ministration from the world without us to the world within us, and enrich the one with

the boundless treasures of the other; or when the feeling goes forth in its own simple and strong expression, when the world within throws itself upon the world without, and gives utterance to emotions which become the living soul of the individual: there is nothing like vanity then, because there is truthfulness. "There is nothing better for a man"—he may well come down to this conclusion from the mere cloud-height that he had gained—"There is nothing better for a man, than that he should eat and drink, and that he should make his soul enjoy good in his labour. This also I saw, that it was from the hand of God. For who can eat, or who else can hasten hereunto, more than I?"—still claiming his supremacy, even in the enjoyment of the table, and turning with disgust from the vanity of intellect to the vanity of unreasoning pleasure. "For God giveth to a man that is good in his sight"—and now a thought seems to come flitting in, as it were, from the Providential doctrines that had established themselves in Judæa—"For God giveth to a man that is good in his sight wisdom, and knowledge, and joy: but to the sinner he giveth travail, to gather and to heap up, that he may give to him that is good before God. This also is vanity and vexation of spirit." Here his thought is taking a turn. Although the idea of death has advanced into and established itself in the composition, the direct conception of it is not yet realised. We have only here the penumbra, as it were—the half-shadow over the book; but at the intense darkness of its centre the writer has not yet arrived; and before he arrives at it, there is a recoil: and from the depth which he has now reached, he rises into a conception of order, into seeing that, notwithstanding all this evil, and the succession of wise men and of fools, and this alternation of pain and of oblivion, still there is really an arrangement in things, there is a regular course of events with this death and life, this celebrity and obscurity, this eating and drinking, and this studying and action: they follow certain laws, they weave themselves together in certain harmony; there is a something in the world which, after all, a man may regard with complacent looks, and with which he may find a sort of tolerable conformity: and this state of things is described in the commencement of the next chapter.

"To every thing there is a season, and a time to every

purpose under the heaven." The very first things for which he specifies these times and seasons are those which constitute the topic of his book, the soul of the mystery that pressed upon his heart; and having relieved himself of this, he can luxuriate in and expatiate on the appropriateness and order of less important realities: "A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted; a time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up; a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance; a time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing; a time to get, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to cast away; a time to rend, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak; a time to love, and a time to hate; a time of war, and a time of peace." Each may have its appropriate sphere and season, which shall be its justification, as it shows that there is really an orderly arrangement of these things which he had represented as altogether vanity. Then comes the question again, "What profit hath he that worketh in that wherein he laboureth? I have seen the travail, which God hath given to the sons of men to be exercised in it." He now recognises in man's destiny the divine appointment to exertion; and in the various necessities and stimuli of that exertion he also acquiesces. In wisdom and goodness, "He hath made every thing beautiful in his time: also he hath set the world in their heart, so that no man can find out the work that God maketh from the beginning to the end. I know that there is no good thing in them, but for a man to rejoice, and to do good in his life. And also that every man should eat and drink, and enjoy the good of all his labour, it is the gift of God. I know that, whatsoever God doeth, it shall be for ever: nothing can be put to it, nor any thing taken from it: and God doeth it, that men should fear before him. That which hath been is now; and that which is to be hath already been; and God requireth that which is past." Instead of being a mere useless iteration, instead of being that wearisome circling of all created things, he now conceives that this "nothing new under the sun" may really have its propriety, its use, its benefit; and that God

requireth that which is past, only to insure thereby its repetition in the present and future time.

Now, this acquiescing theory is a sort of philosophy which has been entertained at different times, and by different men of some note in the world. It is, perhaps, the best kind of philosophy at which any one can arrive, who does not look beyond this existing state of things to the invisible and the future—it is a philosophy which makes out a tolerable sort of case for humanity, and to which a person may deem it wise to conform in spirit. It is the same sort of thing that we have in Cicero's work on *Old Age*, where man is instructed to comfort himself with the consolation that he has gone over the life which the young are only commencing: with them, it is only hope; with him, it has the certainty of memory: they are trusting that they shall number threescore years, or threescore years and ten; he has already numbered them, and can verify the past years of his being: they are commencing the struggle with the world, and looking to wealth or honours, which by hard labour they may in course of years attain; he has attained so much of wealth and of honour as has sufficed for him, and now he looks back upon them and makes himself comfortable in his recollections. And if this be, indeed, all, and if the nature of the individual will allow of it, perhaps thus to put up with the golden mediocrity of this theory of being is the wisest thing that he can do.

A modern version of this system exists in Pope's *Essay on Man;* which contains little that relates to the higher and nobler cravings of our being, which does not grapple with the divine dispensation in its really most potent form; but which, in tracing—as Solomon traces—order and arrangement, propounds to us that there must be somewhere in this great chain of being such a link as man, and therefore let man be content to be that link; and if he asks sometimes why he was made no greater or wiser, let him put himself as right as he can by also asking why he was not made more foolish, or more feeble or degraded. According to this theory, the moral and material worlds have alike their laws, within which all things are bound, and where they work out, in what we are recommended by the poetical philosopher to feel as harmony, that sort of ceaseless circle which Solomon describes in the commencement of his Ecclesiastes. Pope thus

reasons, that we are no more to wonder at crime than at earthquakes, and we are no more to be astounded at portentous moral demonstrations than we are to be startled at the physical shocks to which the system is subject. He says:

> "If the great end be human happiness,
> Then Nature deviates."

As Solomon says, "That which is crooked cannot be made straight." He continues:

> "And can man do less?
> As much that end a constant course requires
> Of showers and sunshine, as of man's desires;
> As much eternal springs and cloudless skies,
> As men for ever temperate, calm, and wise.
> If plagues or earthquakes break not Heaven's design,
> Why then a Borgia or a Catiline?
> Who knows but He whose hand the lightning forms,
> Who heaves Old Ocean, and who wings the storm,
> Pours fierce ambition in a Cæsar's mind,
> Or turns young Ammon loose to scourge mankind?"

There is another view of this philosophy, and altogether a better one, taught by implication rather than by design, by the force of objects rather than by purpose or by a previously arranged plan, in Lord Byron's *Pilgrimage of Childe Harold*. Childe Harold is exhibited in the commencement in a state very analogous to that of Solomon: at least, if he has not tried wisdom so much as the Royal Preacher, he has tried madness and wine and folly more; he has run through the round of enjoyment that was within his compass; and satiated with all, worn out, wearied, and disgusted, he betakes himself to travel as one experiment more, and an experiment not in itself more likely to succeed than all the rest, but for the particular circumstance to which I am about to advert. In the conclusion of that poem, we leave Childe Harold with no sensation of disgust—we have no such revulsion as we have at the beginning—we have no such sense of his miserableness as there was at the beginning. The bitterness is mitigated or gone—the storminess of his nature is hushed—the poem seems to have subsided into something like purity; and yet the poet has described no moral course, he has portrayed no action upon his mind. And what is the meaning of this, but this one fact,—that, in the conclusion of that poem, and in the whole progress of the canto

that advances to that conclusion, he brings human nature into contact with physical nature?—objects of order, of beauty, of eternal harmony, are congregated around us; there rises upon us the sensation of what the Hebrew philosopher expressed: there had been a time for all things, and the time for hatred had gone, and the time for love had come—the time of destruction had passed away, and the time of reorganisation was approaching—the time of restlessness and feverishness was gone, and that of peacefulness was being realised. And at length the poem closes upon us with that magnificent apostrophe to the boundless, to the everlasting ocean, which those who have once read it must always remember—where we do, indeed, see the grandest object of this our material world as a mirror wherein the form of the Deity glasses itself, and whence it is reflected, although it be but faintly, into the soul. And so that better state comes on—I say not that it is the best state of all, but a better state in comparison with the satiety and restlessness of the worn-out votary of sensualism—in which we can look at him complacently, and close the record of his pilgrimage in peace and satisfaction.

Or we may find another version of the same philosophy of a time for all things, and of the order in nature, in the cheerful and alert old age which sometimes a man of intellectual labour realises at the close of his career. I refer to the old age of such a man as the late Jeremy Bentham, where no cloud seems to flit across, although no intense brightness is there—where there is a clearness and a calm—where, though the mind does not look up aspiringly to heaven, it does not look around on the earth or down to the grave with recoil, with horror, with bitterness, or with despair—where, though the spiritual may be absent, the material and the intellectual are in no state of warfare or disturbance; he treads firmly, the bright and brisk old man, through the last days of his life; he would be glad, supposing a few more years to be added to his life, to take them one at the close of each century, to see how much his schemes have prospered in the world, and how much his reforms have been realised. He saw in his early youth that the world had in it a crookedness and a want; and he set to, not to exclaim that all was vanity, but to hammer it into straightness, and to form his arithmetic so as to

complete its numbering; and at this he has worked hardly and heartily, rejoicing in the work God had given him to do, and even at last thinking how he may turn his expiring body to some useful account to the world—how he may make that add its modicum of service, after his mind shall have ceased to animate it—directing that, when it shall have yielded its due course of instruction to the rising generation of those whose care are the physical disorders of mankind, it shall then be enshrined as some memorial of himself,—a fitting memorial, indeed; for there he still sits, the form of the cheerful old man, the smile of his aged benignity still upon his countenance, as if he were yet ready to be revived when the time shall come to put his analytical theories into practice, and meanwhile looking on with everlasting placidity.

But still all this will not do where the imagination and the heart of man have felt their strength, and have put forth their real energies. The sense of justice and of fitness would revolt against it. We cannot see justice or fitness in passing the ploughshare alike over the temple and the cottage, over the palace and the gaol—we cannot see justice and fitness in the wise man and the fool, the righteous and the wicked, the hopeful, the aspiring, and the contented, all lying down together, and all becoming one together—we cannot imagine that these great differences are not to indicate some branching out, some extending process, which is to work from their seeming discrepancy a real harmony, in a system upon a larger scale than is accomplished here. We yearn after—not, it may be, the sort of technical legal proceeding which has been called judgment—but we want a Divine judgment on the progress of the plan, on the position of individuals, on the combination of the whole into celestial harmony.

Our sense of human dignity, of what the attributes of humanity are worth, even in the meanest, revolts at total annihilation. We cannot bear to see humanity levelled with the inferior animals; still less can we bear to see it levelled even with the rotting shrub that perishes in the soil on which it once grew. We cannot endure, as we see a human being in such a condition, to think it his final state, when it can be said that he

"neither hears nor sees,
Borne round in earth's diurnal course
With rocks and stones and trees."

It seems not fitting with the promise of his nature; and if there be something of incongruity in associating the life of the superior animals, of the lion or of the eagle, with mere dust, still these do not aspire. Man aspires, and here is another source of incongruity in the present appearance of his lot; he feels the tendency towards a higher state of being—he yearns after the invisible and the enduring, even when he is most surrounded with the material realities that press upon the senses, and most closely bind him within the narrow confines of his mortal condition. These all lead him onward, and they raise his spirit towards that Spirit of eternal as well as of universal being in which he has his existence.

Solomon felt and has expressed all this: he felt the sense of justice and of fitness violated in death happening alike to all: "And moreover I saw under the sun the place of judgment, that wickedness was there; and the place of righteousness, that iniquity was there. I said in mine heart God shall judge the righteous and the wicked; for there is a time there for every purpose and for every work." He felt the degradation: "I said in my heart concerning the estate of the sons of men, that God might manifest them, and that they might see that they themselves are beasts. For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them: as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath; so that a man hath no preëminence above a beast: for all is vanity. All go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again." And then he expresses dimly and remotely, but yet by implication, the aspiration, the hope, the desire, the yearning impulse onward and upward, which even the universal annihilation of the grave cannot obliterate. "Who knoweth the spirit of man that goeth upward, and the spirit of the beast that goeth downward to the earth?" From this his mind recoils back to his own bitterness, and then comes on that darker and deeper conception of death of which I spoke—then comes on that thick darkness which, like the darkness of the plague in the land of Egypt, may be felt. "Wherefore I perceive that there is nothing

better, than that a man should rejoice in his own works; for that is his portion: for who shall bring him to see what shall be after him? So I returned, and considered all the oppressions that are done under the sun: and behold the tears of such as were oppressed, and they had no comforter; and on the side of their oppressors there was power; but they had no comforter. Wherefore I praised the dead which are already dead more than the living which are yet alive. Yea, better is he than both they, which have not yet been, who hath not seen the evil work which is done under the sun."

In this state, although assured of the recoil, we must now leave the royal philosopher. It is a sort of Manichean conclusion; for if it is indeed so,—if the dead are better than the living, and if non-existence is to be preferred to either,—then the world must needs be the work of a demon rather than of a Deity. And there were those who thought it so. Manicheanism is a theory, it was a philosophy: Manicheanism even grew into a religion; and its spirit still belongs, to some extent, to many religions. But Manicheanism became a religion, and, becoming a religion, it evolved the principle of its own correction; for though from all universal being may spring religion, yet, if the feeling of religion be there, it will purify itself as it proceeds, until it conducts us to the worship of God—of God, our Father—of God, the loving Father of all mankind.

THE BOOK OF ECCLESIASTES.

No. IV.

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The book of Ecclesiastes, so far as our exposition of it has hitherto proceeded, is distinguished by continuity of feeling and by elevation of style. The portion of it over which we have passed bears all the character of poetry. A succession of strong and deep emotions present themselves to our contemplation, and they lead us onward as with the flowing in of a tide towards that anticipated result in which such varied feelings are to find their final rest. We have thus traced the writer's view, his mournful and bitter view, of the natural course of things—his perception of vanity in the processes continually going on, which seem to him but a ceaseless circling of the elements, bringing things back to their pristine condition. We have witnessed his self-accusation, the condemnation transferred from nature to his own soul, as he endeavoured in vain to find the highest good of humanity in the different modes of enjoyment that were within his reach; and we have seen these things rendered more deep and dark by the introduction of the idea of death—of death absorbing all, and spreading its own thick covering of oblivion over nature, humanity, feeling, and consciousness. At the point, however, at which we are now arrived—the 4th verse of the 4th chapter—a difference of style and of thought is to be observed, which continues through no inconsiderable portion of the remainder of the book. I should say that from the commencement of the 4th chapter to about the middle of the 11th is either an interpolation by some other hand, or else, if it be the production of Solomon—and to this I rather incline—written at a different time and in a different state of mind. There is neither the continuity of feeling nor the elevation

of style which have been remarked in the preceding portion. We are sometimes presented with what appears to be only a miscellaneous collection of precepts and of proverbs: occasionally the theology and morality of the book lose something of their free character, and claim more affinity than is usual in the writings of Solomon with what was commonplace and conventional in his day. There is unity neither of arrangement, of emotion, nor of construction. Any of these may give a composition its character as a work of art. By any one of these may the mind be enabled to rest with satisfaction, to admire its proportion, to see its tendency as a whole, and to calculate upon its due impression on the minds of those by whom it is studied. When the argument carries us on to the linking together of the premises and the inferences which are thence derived—when we perceive the distribution of a subject according to its logical bearings, the arraying under each of the topics of the evidence by which that particular portion of the fabric is supported, and the combining of them together, so that the mind which has followed the whole train is left to rest in the same conclusion with the writer—we recognise a unity which is adapted to affect our minds, and to present to us an object of contemplation that may be regarded with complacency. And such is the case also where the feeling alone gives unity—where the mind is kept in one connected state of emotion. But here is neither the one nor the other. With the exception of the last chapter, wherein the pathetic and impressive description of old age forms an appropriate and poetical conclusion to the first part of the book, we can trace no unity in the remaining chapters, unless that unity be that they all belong to one another, as indicative of the decline of a great intellect, as exhibiting a mind falling from its strength of emotion as well as from its strength of argument into imbecility—the decline and fall of a spirit—a topic as great and as interesting as that of the decline and fall of an empire—and retaining in this weakness an occasional vigour, giving a sufficient power to describe and bewail its own weakness. The course which I shall pursue, therefore, is just to glance over the chapters from the point where we left off last Sunday,—from the commencement of the 4th chapter to the 6th verse of the 11th chapter,—reserving the conclusion of

the book for the exposition of next Sunday morning. I shall not read these chapters through, but simply point your attention to such passages in them, taking them in the order in which they stand, as, for some special reason, may have claims on our notice.

In the 4th verse of the 4th chapter, we trace the disposition which has been hitherto remarked in Solomon in so many of the preceding expositions of this book—his selfism—his desire of being continually recognised in what he did—his impatience of the absence of what he claimed as just appreciation—his taking it to heart as an injustice and his feeling it as a bitterness, when wisdom existed, that wisdom was not recognised, and when power was possessed, that power was not reverenced. "Again," he says, "I considered all travail, and every right work, that for this a man is envied of his neighbour. This is also vanity and vexation of spirit." And assuredly it is; and the man who engages in a right work, expecting not to be envied by those who are aspiring to shine within the same sphere with himself, will meet with accumulated disappointments. It is not the state of mind which is most adapted to the achievement of a right work. In that state of mind we should be regardless of whether it is recognised or not recognised, whether it is envied or applauded, whether honour accrues to the individual, or whether his doom may be apparently to sink into utter oblivion. It is but seldom that the author of a great work in the world receives while living, or even after his death, the glory which to that work properly belongs. Wickliffe exposes the errors of the Church of Rome—he claims for his countrymen the scriptures in their native language—single-handed, he maintains a conflict with the political and with the ecclesiastical powers—and he perishes in the struggle; while, after he is laid in his grave, or, rather, after his remains are torn from it, his bones consumed, and his ashes scattered to the winds of heaven, some prelate like a Cranmer arises to occupy the position of honour for which the other had prepared the way, and to stand forth to subsequent times as the patriarch of an English Reformation. So when a Columbus, through perils which no mind less than his own could have grappled with—through difficulties and dangers accumulating themselves as much in the timidity, or obstinacy, or insubordination of those

around him, as in the elements with which he had to struggle—discovers a new continent, which is in future ages to provide an asylum for the wretched and the oppressed of the Old World, he meets with disgrace and imprisonment in his old age; while Americanus Vespucius follows in his train in comparative ease and safety, and gives his own name to the vast regions that have thus been united with the world of living beings. A Clarkson abolishes the slave-trade, and poets and historians transfer the honours of the act to the name of Wilberforce. It is ever the course of things in the world, that the mind which prepares great blessings for humanity passes away, leaving others—not knowing who, as Solomon says, may come after to enjoy it—to reap most of the honour and of the immediate advantage from his fellow-creatures that are thence to be derived. What then? His reward is not in his own little self, in the honour of his own name, or in the homage which he hopes to receive from others, but in the right work: he pursues that right work for its own sake, and rejoices not in what may redound to his honour, but in what may secure its completion. I notice this as the intimation of one of those mental qualities which conduct us towards the scepticism and suffering that are experienced by the author of Ecclesiastes. He felt that the grandeur—in which he gloried to eclipse those who had gone before him on the throne of Israel—had its close,—that, towards the end of his reign especially, it entangled him in difficulties and perplexities, and surrounded him with discontent, until, while he could not forego the pride of being so great, of being conspicuous and preëminent as king in Jerusalem, he could yet exclaim, as he does in the 6th verse, "Better is an handful with quietness, than both the hands full with travail and vexation of spirit." Indeed, he seems to have felt that in the very height of his elevation there was that to make him the more conspicuous mark for envy and censure, to which he was so exceedingly susceptible. He complains of this: "Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour. For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up." He had felt this, probably, not merely in the attitude of the ecclesiastical censurers

around him,—whose disposition towards him we have already noticed,—but in the consciousness of his own mind. Indeed, this leads him to appropriate to himself the terms, the severe and bitter terms, that probably some of the priesthood, with whom he seems to have been in a state of enmity, would apply to him. He exclaims, in the 13th verse, "Better is a poor and a wise child than an old and foolish king, who will no more be admonished." He felt that, with all his wisdom, such was the mode in which some would speak of him: he appropriated it to himself, and aggravated his own bitterness by accepting the statements of those whom he yet regarded as his calumniators.

The commencement of the 5th chapter appears to me to be distinctly traceable to that alienation between the King of Israel and the priests and prophets of Israel which has led to the common conception of Solomon—to the ideas of his gross folly and his commission of idolatry, and so on, that have been commonly received. We find him, in this passage, giving admonitions about worship, and giving them with some remarkable peculiarities of tone and direction. It seems as if he had in his view those who made long prayers—those who boasted of having dreams and visions, and those who affected to see into futurity—those who arrogated to themselves the possession of the highest theological knowledge, and who were censuring him, whilst he felt that in the wisdom of his philosophy was something far above all their theological pretensions. He winds up his admonition by saying (7th verse), "For in the multitude of dreams and many words there are also divers vanities: but fear thou God." Reverence the creating and presiding Power—reverence it in the rationality of thine own intelligence, and let that be thy guide rather than dreams and visions and a multitude of words, which only show the ignorance, presumption, or superstition of those by whom they are put forth as the essence of all religion. And that such is the spirit of this passage, is made more probable by the eulogy at the end of the chapter (the 18th and following verses) on a kind of morality which is always opposed by a priesthood, or by enthusiasts such as those we have supposed to have assailed and tormented Solomon. He rebukes their ascetic morality in a work which has often been regarded as penitential in its character,

though I think incorrectly so regarded—but in a work which has such bearing of language and expression as to cause its being regarded as penitential—he visits with the severest censure the ascetic morality which the religionists of form have always endeavoured to substitute for real goodness and moral worth. "Behold," he says, "that which I have seen: it is good and comely for one to eat and to drink, and to enjoy the good of all his labour that he taketh under the sun all the days of his life, which God giveth him: for it is his portion. Every man, also, to whom God hath given riches and wealth, and hath given him power to eat thereof, and to take his portion, and to rejoice in his labour; this is the gift of God. For he shall not much remember the days of his life; because God answereth him in the joy of his heart." He recognises the voice of the Deity, the inspiration of heaven, in the elation of human feeling—in the abounding of human enjoyment—in the dedication to those purposes of pleasure and of delight of which they are capable, of the elements by which we are surrounded: that is to say, he opposes himself directly and strongly to the asceticism which priesthoods in all ages have endeavoured to represent as the only valuable morality in the sight of Heaven.

In the 6th chapter there is little to remark, except that he again reverts to the notion of death. It comes not with the sort of introduction that precedes it in the passages before expounded: it breaks in, as it were, upon his contemplation; but there it is, as an idea that would not cease to haunt him after it had once been admitted into the mind; and the way in which it is here brought in is by reference to continued existence, to old age, and to the multiplication of what is commonly deemed good by our fellow-creatures. "If a man beget an hundred children, and live many years, so that the days of his years be many, and his soul be not filled with good, and also that he have no burial"—a remarkable instance either of superstition or of association introducing an expression that is little in harmony with the other portions of the work, evidently supposing that the absence of burial was some serious calamity to the individual—"and also that he have no burial; I say, that an untimely birth is better than he. For he cometh in with vanity, and departeth in darkness, and his name shall

be covered with darkness. Moreover he hath not seen th. sun, nor known any thing; this hath more rest than the other. Yea, though he live a thousand years twice told, yet hath he seen no good: do not all go to one place?" In the midst of these contemplations, while looking upon man's life as a shadow, we find the desire, the thirst for reputation again bubbling up, as it were, in the spirit of the philosopher; this, too, haunts him like the notion of death; from this, too, he cannot escape—his selfism surveys it on all sides; and in the beginning of the 7th chapter he exclaims, "A good name is better than precious ointment; and the day of death than the day of one's birth." The day of death is thought to be better than the day of birth by those who look round with this dissatisfied disposition on the dealings of their fellow-creatures with them, who always take to their hearts the hope that after death justice will be done more amply to their characters and their deeds. In this view it is that the superiority of death to birth commends itself to those who wish to live in the opinion of others. The sentiment is analogous to that ascribed to an Irish rebel: "Let no man write my epitaph; let my grave go uninscribed, my memory be at rest, till other times shall come, and other men—they who will do me justice." A calm reliance upon the future, the result of greater simplicity of character than Solomon evinces, would enable a man to rest in this expectation without being much solicitous whether it would arrive late or early. But we find him again teased and stimulated by the remarks that were passed on his own character and reign. There were those who were crying out for the better days of King David, or perhaps even of Saul. There were those who, not content with wide dominion, with a peaceful reign, and with the flourishing of knowledge and of the arts under Solomon, looked back to the period when perhaps their priesthood was more reverenced, or when their armies were more dreaded—looked back to days comparatively of superstition and of bloodshed, and coveted the return of those "good old times," and drew disparaging comparisons between them and the reign of the philosophical monarch. "Say not thou" (10th verse, 7th chapter), "What is the cause that the former days were better than these? for thou dost not inquire wisely concerning this"—or, as it is in the mar-

gin, "thou dost not inquire out of wisdom"—not out of wisdom, but out of censoriousness—not for the purpose of freely tracing the current of events in human history, but for the purpose of putting forth acrimonious and supercilious remarks on the state of things then existing.

I must pass rapidly over these several passages that require some notice, in order to arrive at the end of this portion of the work. In the 21st verse he says, "Take no heed unto all words that are spoken; lest thou hear thy servant curse thee." Fond old man, that lived so much for praise! to whom just appreciation—that which his own mind deemed just appreciation—was an element of tolerable existence; perhaps he even listened, as Oriental princes have often been known to do, to the discourses of his own servants: he may have wandered like the Caliph in the *Arabian Nights*—may have gone disguised, in order to hearken to the converse of different classes of his subjects, expecting to reap from them golden opinions, anticipating only the gratification of listening here and there to the praises of the wisdom of Solomon; or wondering at that knowledge, to be edified by which the Queen of Sheba came from a far country in the south; and in this expedition he finds his ears assailed by a very different species of remark—perhaps his own servants cursing him for injustice, though his judgments had been so diligently recorded on the page of history, that they might stand as an evidence to all coming ages of the spirit with which he had administered the affairs of his kingdom; and so he writes the admonition for the good of others, not seeing that a different lesson might have been drawn from the incident, "Take no heed unto all words that are spoken; lest thou hear thy servant curse thee;" when it would have been wiser to have said, Heed the curse as well as the blessing—heed the censure not less than the praise. At the end of this chapter, after the reminiscences of the time which has been described, he falls into a species of misanthropy—he complains that he could not find a good man or a good woman; humanity did not satisfy him in any of its characteristics; and so, although he does not directly arraign the Creator for making a being that did not please King Solomon, yet, while acknowledging the goodness of nature, he passes a sort of general censure, he puts a mark

of opprobrium, on the whole species: "Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions;" and this mere effusion of spleen—this false sort of misanthropy, that does not go to the depth of the real emotions of the misanthrope—this pettiness of feeling, that affects to vindicate God in order that it may disparage humanity, and that visits upon the whole human race what is only its own littleness—this has been manufactured into a doctrine of theological orthodoxy, and set forth as an article of faith for men to receive on peril of their everlasting condemnation.

Solomon rests here but a very short time. The feeling was too small, too petty for his mind, and he falls back upon himself, he takes refuge in the consciousness of his own wisdom; and when that fails to satisfy him, why, then, he takes refuge in the consciousness of his own power—of his despotic authority as a monarch. Thus, in the 8th chapter, he says, "Who is as the wise man? and who knoweth the interpretation of a thing? a man's wisdom maketh his face to shine." In the doubt suggested from the want of others' appreciation of this, he turns to the consciousness of his regal power—"Where the word of a king is, there is power: and who may say unto him, What doest thou?" By a curious but very natural chain of thought, this self-satisfaction—this retiring upon his own wisdom and his own grandeur, in order that thence he might defy his calumniators, and overbear those who aspersed him—directs his mind to the very point where wisdom and power were to become as nothing, where they were to be levelled with folly and with weakness. He goes on almost immediately, "Because to every purpose there is time and judgment"—every circumstance that in the former part of the book administered consolation to his mind, now serves only to deepen and embitter his feelings—"Because to every purpose there is time and judgment, therefore the misery of man is great upon him. For he knoweth not that which shall be: for who can tell him when it shall be? There is no man that hath power over the spirit to retain the spirit; neither hath he power in the day of death: and there is no discharge in that war; neither shall wickedness deliver those that are given to it. All this have I seen, and applied my heart unto every work that is

done under the sun :" and now comes again the recoil from the consciousness of his kingly authority : " there is a time wherein one man ruleth over another to his own hurt. And so I saw the wicked buried, who had come and gone from the place of the holy, and they were forgotten in the city where they had so done : this is also vanity."

After some other reflections of this description, the style rises in the 9th chapter into a passage worthy of being connected with the best portions of the book, with the most poetical portions that have passed before us—a passage which stands out in bold relief from the proverbial sayings and preceptive maxims by which it is surrounded, in which he regards the whole of human destiny as ground down to the dust, as identified, as absorbed in one sensation of annoyance and of horror by the passing of death over all : " For all this I considered in my heart even to declare all this, that the righteous, and the wise, and their works, are in the hand of God : no man knoweth either love or hatred by all that is before them. All things come alike to all : there is one event to the righteous and to the wicked ; to the good and to the clean, and to the unclean ; to him that sacrificeth, and to him that sacrificeth not : as is the good, so is the sinner ; and he that sweareth, as he that feareth an oath. This is an evil among all things that are done under the sun, that there is one event unto all : yea, also the heart of the sons of men is full of evil, and madness is in their heart while they live, and after that they go to the dead. For to him that is joined to all the living there is hope : for a living dog is better than a dead lion. For the living know that they shall die : but the dead know not any thing, neither have they any more a reward ; for the memory of them is forgotten. Also their love, and their hatred, and their envy, is now perished ; neither have they any more a portion for ever in any thing that is done under the sun." He dwells on contemplations such as these until his brain seems to reel with them, until the darkness seems almost to generate madness, and he draws his moral in a way that appears to show that the philosopher has lost the even balance of his mind, and gives to the inference itself a sort of touch of mad morality : " Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart ; for God now accepteth thy works.

Let thy garments be always white; and let thy head lack no ointment. Live joyfully with the wife whom thou lovest all the days of the life of thy vanity, which he hath given thee under the sun, all the days of thy vanity: for that is thy portion in this life, and in thy labour which thou takest under the sun. Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest." It is a part of the evil of the manner in which this book is composed — written, as we may imagine, by Solomon at very different times—that from this gloomy magnificence we are brought back, in the 10th chapter, to his continual querulousness about opinion and reputation. The style again falls off—it becomes comparatively feeble and commonplace: "Dead flies cause the ointment of the apothecary to send forth a stinking savour: so doth a little folly him that is in reputation for wisdom and honour." And again there is in this chapter the recoil upon himself—the adoption of what he would imagine to be the severest and most supercilious language of his calumniators—"Woe to thee, O land, when thy king is a child, and thy princes eat in the morning!" And thus he goes on until, in the 6th verse of the 11th chapter, he finishes with a memorable admonition to exertion, to ceaseless exertion, as if in this he would find some relief from the weariness with which all things appeared to him to pursue their vain course. "In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand: for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good"—that is, work; do not regard the result, do not hope for benefiting others or for a reaction upon your own minds; but go on, fill up the limited portion of your sojourn upon the earth, seek not even for happiness; but still labour, labour through your appointed time; do something in the world, whether it be little or much—and I suppose he would almost have added, whether it be for good or for evil.

We have now, I am glad to say, gone through the least satisfactory, interesting, or useful portion of the book of Ecclesiastes. In the next lecture, I shall have to connect the earlier and more poetical portion of it with the conclusion, which is in every way worthy of that commence-

ment. The power of the book is impaired by the lack of unity. Unity is ever the source of power. It is this which gives such a composition as the drama of Job its hold upon the mind: we are led on in one continuous train of thought and feeling, when we find Satan accusing the good man before the Majesty of heaven; when we follow him through his accumulation of afflictions, one grief piled upon another; when we enter with him into the great contest, the everlasting discussion, of good and evil, of Providence and justice; and when we witness the restoration of his peacefulness and prosperity in the conclusion,—it is this unity, this oneness, that casts its light upon particular passages, and that makes the energy and worth of the whole to be at once appreciated by the mind. It is this unity that runs through nature, and that displays God in nature—that blends together objects that are infinitely remote in space and time —that unites them in one great, pervading, harmonious plan—and shows us the infinite, the universal, the everlasting, by the shadow of eternity, in that which is comparatively but for a moment; and it is this which should make the strength, the grace, or the beauty of life. There should be oneness in the annals of human existence, as in a work of art, amid all the variety of scenes in which we may be placed, of the occupations in which we may engage, of the interests which in their turn must be felt, and whose characters may be continually diversified,—there should still be a oneness of thought, of feeling, of soul, of spiritual being, evident and traceable through the whole course, uniting it in all its different stages, giving to it here its best condition, and best preparing it for a prolonged existence.

We may also observe, on this portion of the book, that the great suffering of the royal preacher arose from causes that have operated in a similar way in other countries, and through all periods—from causes that should have been his best encouragement and support: a philosophical monarch raising the Jewish name and nation to a height of glory that it had never known before; wise, profound in his own speculations, most pure in the theology which he has put on record as the embodiment of his opinions, yet stamped with degradation in the pages of that country's history — pages the production of priestly

writers; and the intimations are very distinct of his having lived in a sort of warfare with that class—this, and his exceeding susceptibility to opinion, are the source of most that he endured, so far as it could be traced to external causes. And this ecclesiastical power, this power which claimed to itself the highest honours, which would tolerate no competition in the public mind—this ecclesiastical power that grew so compact from age to age—what were its achievements? what did it do at last but cause the rejection of the Messiah of Judæa, and terminate its own crimes with the crucifixion of Christ?

Christ formed no Church—he raised no power of this sort—he did not attempt to consolidate any thing like an ecclesiastical domination—he went forth as the sower to the fields to sow; he scattered truths around here and there, trusting that, though some might fall on stony ground, and others be choked by weeds, yet some would find an appropriate soil in which to spring up, and bear abundant produce. Ecclesiastical institutions, ecclesiastical forms, have generally created a species of standing army to wage war upon civil right—to wage war upon real religion—to wage war upon the true freedom of individual interpretation of the scriptures—and occasionally, as in our own days, to wage direct war upon the diffusion of knowledge and upon the training of the millions in that education which may give them the semblance even of spiritual existence. And as such institutions have become distinguished for evil tendencies, so has public opinion, when consulted as the wise man, though not in his wisdom, was so often disposed to consult it—that consciousness of the thoughts of others such as he has portrayed, wherever it is found, is the occasion of discomfort, which may differ in degree, but is the same in kind with what stands upon record as bearing so prominent a place in his list of endurances. It is not in this that we are to live. The only real wisdom is simplicity, truthfulness of spirit—a wiser thing than all the philosophy of Solomon—and to which, we trust, through all these diversities and conflicts, his own spirit might be working its way. Simplicity of soul, genuine truthfulness, is not only philosophy, but religion also—it is faith and hope and charity: it confides not in crooked ways or crooked characters, but in its own consciousness of truth; when it

recognises truth in others, it throws itself on that verity with a reliance on its power, and an assurance of the exercise of that power in a benignant manner: and thus it ascends through all gradations until its faith is religious faith in the highest and strongest degree, as directed to the pervading principle of universal being. It anticipates, it hopes; for in itself are suggestions and impulses that continually refer to futurity—that claim futurity as a part of themselves—that give the strongest assurance, the assurance of consciousness, that the all in all of the human heart cannot be in the present—that there is a portion yet to come in the future, in order to give unity to human existence. It is love, as well as charity, faith, and hope, which prompts to this belief; for it recognises loveliness, being itself the loveliest thing in universal being, and thus partaking of that spirit which, poured out upon material chaos, reduced it to order and harmony,—and which, as it is shed upon the moral being, as it broods over the moral universe, elicits their spiritual harmony, filling both with the presence of God, whose name is Love.

THE BOOK OF ECCLESIASTES.

No. V.

July 14*th*, 1839.

We have arrived, through the delineation of various thoughts and emotions, at the last page of this eventful history, we might say of this curious and impressive portion of autobiography; for, though it details not the events of Solomon's reign—though it leaves us uninformed of the laws which he framed, the institutions he established, the judgments he pronounced, the regions over which he extended his dominions—it makes us acquainted with what is of infinitely more importance than these, and with that in which we must feel a much deeper sympathy—with the workings of his soul under the influence of bitter disappointment, of strong emotions, of blind and obstinate questionings, from which he seems continually to recede appalled; it shows him as a man struggling within the confines of man's destiny, and endeavouring for himself and for others to achieve something of light in the darkness, of hope in the despondency. We may not have found in this exposition that there is complete warrant for bestowing on Solomon the sounding titles with which creeds and catechisms sometimes adorn his name, or for calling him the wisest man in the world; nor, on the other hand, assuredly, do we find any thing to warrant the expressions of contempt which have sometimes been used towards him, as a comparatively ignorant and unreflecting Oriental barbarian. He was neither the one nor the other. In his day, and according to his means and circumstances, he was a great moral experimentalist, who endeavoured in heart and soul to solve the grand enigma of human being and of human happiness. As such, he cannot but furnish from age to age materials for reflection and for instruction.

I spoke of concluding the exposition this morning, taking it up from the 7th verse of the 11th chapter, where we left off last Sunday; but I must previously notify to you, that I regard the book as closing with the 7th verse of the 12th chapter. The passage which follows is, to my mind at least, evidently the work of some other hand. It bears no seal of Solomon, none of the impress of his mind, upon it; it is rather a commentary upon him, and a commentary that in its kind is curious. This epitaph, beginning at the 8th verse, and going on to the close of the book, runs thus: "Vanity of vanities, saith the preacher; all is vanity:" rather an unmeaning iteration of the verbal expression of what in Solomon was the repetition of a strong continuous emotion. "And moreover, because the preacher was wise, he still taught the people knowledge; yea, he gave good heed, and sought out, and set in order many proverbs. The preacher sought to find out acceptable words: and that which was written was upright, even words of truth. The words of the wise are as goads, and as nails fastened by the masters of assemblies, which are given from one shepherd. And further, by these, my son, be admonished: of making many books there is no end; and much study is a weariness of the flesh. Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil."

In these few words there are intimations of what I have had abundant occasion to refer to in the course of the exposition of the book of Ecclesiastes, namely, of the different spirit that animated such a man as Solomon, the enlightened and philosophical monarch of Judæa, and that which ruled over the disposition of their priests and some of their prophets. There were indications renewed here, as we have noticed, of the jealousy which existed between them. The entrance of this book of Ecclesiastes into the canon of the Old Testament was, as I told you at the commencement, disputed—it was disputed for a considerable time—and only made its place good there with difficulty, and after hard discussion; being after all, I believe, held back by the Jews from their youth until they thought their reason was of an age to grapple with the difficulties and scepticism expressed

in it. We have here a strange incongruity. The wisdom of Solomon had become proverbial among the people. It was in vain to attempt to deny it. By endeavouring to moderate the grandeur of his name, they only brought their own into doubt and obscurity. Being compelled to allow him a place amongst the great writers of their age and nation, they adopted a method of praising him according to their own manner, and of rendering a forced and laggard testimony to that which it had become impossible for them to controvert. This is one disposition manifested here. Another is a propensity to underrate scientific and other kinds of knowledge. It was not in the spirit of Solomon to say, "Of making many books there is no end." True, in tracing the ceaseless round of material and moral objects, he has spoken disparagingly of wisdom, and put it in the same category as folly; but this was not the usual dictate of Solomon's mind. The conclusion, as it stands, was the work of those who were fearful of such disquisitions, who took no pains to preserve the treatises which he composed on natural history, and on other branches of scientific knowledge—who preserved not his songs either, but handed down to us only one out of the many hundreds which, according to the testimony of their historians, he wrote, and according to the modes of that day published. There is a fear lest these things should interpose—should come in the way of the particular round of the studies within which the priesthood of Judæa, like other priesthoods, wished to confine the instruction of the people. And a third manifestation of the interference here of a priestly hand to append the epitaph to Solomon, is the conclusion of it,—the distinct introduction of the notion of judgment,—a tenet which obtained in a comparatively later time than that of Solomon, but which seems to be appended here by way of putting right the question about the orthodoxy of the book, of making it all true and sound, according to the creed which was held by the priests of the generation when the addition was made. Now, in these three characteristics we have the characteristics of the conduct of a priesthood in all times, countries, and circumstances. We might adduce striking parallels to every one of these indications in modern times; for in what but a similar spirit is it that we find those who will deny the possibility of salvation to

the holders of tenets such as were held by Locke, and Newton, and Hartley, and Lardner; and who yet, at other times, will aggrandise these works as the glory of Christianity, and will represent the mere enumeration of them as sufficient to put down all the pretensions of scepticism? We find, also, the same disposition to undervalue, and sometimes to counteract by what approaches towards the confines of persecution, disquisitions of a scientific description, the inquiries and researches into physical science which may occasionally come into collision with theological dogmas. As they thought that "of making many books there was no end," whether they were books on natural history, or whatever other subjects occupied the pen and thoughts of Solomon, so there are those who look with a suspicious eye upon geological researches, who are not satisfied with astronomy, who are particularly jealous of historical criticism, and who, seeing the world is inundated with books almost without end, would make a very peculiar and carefully selected list, and not a very long one, for the instruction of those whom they would generally take under their especial care; and they show abundant tendency to do that which the priests did in the conclusion of this epitaph, namely, to preserve, at all risks, the supremacy of dogma. If there is to be such a thing as education—if, in spite of all their antagonism, knowledge is to be diffused, and its light is to shine upon the multitudes, then by all means let it be coupled with some statement of "sound doctrine:" let that be instilled, hammered into the minds of the rising generation, so that whatever becomes of thought—whatever becomes of feeling—whatever becomes of knowledge or of science—whatever becomes of the just appreciation of the great, the true, or the beautiful, at any rate the orthodox doctrine may be upheld, may be perpetuated from generation to generation.

I consider the book, therefore, as I said, to conclude with the 7th verse of the 12th chapter; and towards that, from the point at which I left off last Sunday, let us now advance.

The last words to which I then adverted, the 6th verse of the 11th chapter, are an earnest admonition to ceaseless toil. They are like that by the iteration of which a modern philosopher has distinguished himself, when he said, "Pro-

duce, produce; let something be realised, let some external memorial be left in the world of the working of the mind within." "In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand: for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good." But the book, as I intimated to you, was probably composed at different periods, in different states of mind, in different states of body,—some portions of it bearing the marks of a date long after that which other portions indicate; and when the writer himself, the royal preacher, had learnt to feel, and deeply to feel, that he was not the man he had been. Age was coming upon him—age was making him conscious of weakness and infirmity—age was interposing its benumbing power against what had been the strong vital beatings of his heart—age was dimming his sight. It is to this that the next verse alludes. Probably something had reminded him of the approaches of bodily decay in this particular; he no longer beheld the glaring and brilliant sights with which he had surrounded himself —the objects of his palace and of his right royal gardens: neither art nor nature ministered to his senses as they had been accustomed; and when he endeavoured to become the strenuous intellectual workman that he had been in his strongest days, this failing sight checked his course, impeded his labour; he could not, though he would, realise his own precept; it was not for him in the morning to sow his seed, and in the evening he was reluctantly compelled to withhold his hand. And so he exclaims, "Truly the light is sweet," with that same reverting to earlier associations and enjoyments which spreads its gloom and its bitterness over this composition: "Truly the light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun"—then felt to be the most pleasant when they can maintain no longer their steady gaze. "But if a man live many years, and rejoice in them all; yet let him remember the days of darkness; for they shall be many. All that cometh is vanity."

It is a dreary prospect, a dreary and appalling one. There was an Englishman once who knew better how to grapple with this prospect than did the wise King Solomon —there was an Englishman once who taught the world that the days of darkness need not be days of vanity, and

that the most congenial mode of spending them was not that of the mere useless and fruitless recollection of the enjoyments and blessings of former times—there was an Englishman once who could speak of his own blindness, and of the cause of that blindness, and of the darkness in which it had plunged him, in terms such as these:

"Cyriac, this three years' day these eyes, though clear,
To outward view, of blemish or of spot,
Bereft of light, their seeing have forgot,
Nor to their idle orbs doth sight appear
Of sun, or moon, or star, throughout the year,
Or man, or woman. Yet I argue not
Against Heaven's hand or will, nor bate a jot
Of heart or hope; but still bear up and steer
Right onward. What supports me? dost thou ask:
The conscience, Friend, to have lost them overplied
In Liberty's defence, my noble task,
Of which all Europe rings from side to side.
This thought might lead me through the world's vain mask
Content though blind, had I no better guide."

Well might he give utterance to reflections so different from those of Solomon, and so far above them; for he, too, had reared his temple—not a material architecture, like that of Jerusalem—not a thing of stone and of wood, of gilding and of cedar—not a palace where external sacrifices and homage were to be offered, and which must at length, with all the divine glory that inhabited it, become the prey of the invading enemy. In his *Eikonoklastes* Milton had demolished the political and social idolatries of his time, in a spirit as remote from bigotry as that in which Solomon tolerated the idolatries of those who inhabited his palace; and in his *Defence of the People of England* he had raised his temple—a temple which stands not like that built with hands—a temple which, while it commemorates his own name, is consecrated to the power to which he did homage—a temple in which God abides with a brighter glory than he ever did in that temple of old Jerusalem, pouring out there his spirit of truth and power and freedom, and inviting like-minded men there to worship Him who, in giving us reason, endows us with the charter of mental liberty, and fills us with mental grandeur and enjoyment: and Milton had not only built his stately temple to the Lord, like Solomon; but, like Solomon too,

he had reared and garnished his own pleasure-houses for his soul—he had sung his canticles in a purer spirit, and with a more enduring affection—he had in his *Comus*, and in his minor poems, gathered around him the rich delights of reality and of imagination; they were more splendid works of art and more lovely portraitures, they had more enduring action upon the soul and the sense, than all that Solomon accumulated; and though the cedars of Lebanon were hewn down by the workmen of the Hebrew monarch, and Hiram sent him the treasures of Tyre and of Sidon, Milton, in very different circumstances, ensconced in no stately palace, surrounded with none of the means and appliances that still ministered to the declining senses of Solomon, "fallen on evil days and evil tongues," had yet his resources; and those "days of darkness," those "days of vanity," which Ecclesiastes would have predicted, were the days of *Paradise Lost*, of *Paradise Regained*, of *Samson Agonistes*, of some of his political productions, and of his majestic appeal to the churches of Christ on behalf of what he deemed the pure theology of the scriptures. Days of darkness, indeed, they were; but, in the instance of one at least of his children, affection ministered to him as his amanuensis, and ever and anon noting his nightly dreams, which came thronged with images that made him feel less the loss of sight, and realise intently his connection with the invisible and future world, as his "late espoused saint" came to him "like Alcestes from the grave;" and in such works and in such feelings passed long days, long years, that a sovereign might deprecate as years of darkness and of vanity, but in which the immortal fame of one of the greatest and purest spirits that the world has ever produced was built up to command the veneration of all futurity.

"Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thy heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment. Therefore remove sorrow from thy heart, and put away evil from thy flesh: for childhood and youth are vanity. Remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them." We have here a very brief and emphatic condemnation alike of youth and

age—a splenetic one, and in portion perhaps rankling; for the mind of Solomon, that rejected so many of the tenets of his time, would scarcely believe in that judgment—not future judgment, but judgment in this world—in which the Jews of his day believed, and which it is evident he strongly doubted, if he did not directly controvert it. However, he treats both periods with comparative scorn; and now he advances towards his impressive negation of the infirmities of age. It was for a period long subsequent to detect a fallacy in this view of the destiny of humanity, and to throw a light upon the means that should be employed to postpone a period of suffering which to some extent may yet be inevitable. The powers of medical science and art have prolonged the average duration of human life: years and years have they added to it, since the time of Solomon; and the addition is such as remarkably to impress us with the wisdom of nature, with the latent good which lurks in the providential arrangements, for the human mind to develop it from time to time. The fact may be considered as ascertained now, that whatever is added to the duration of human life, is added to its best, its most effective, its most enjoying portion. I refer to the view of this subject in Dr. Southwood Smith's *Philosophy of Health*, where he has completely elucidated this interesting and satisfactory point:

"The division of human life into periods or epochs is not an arbitrary distinction, but is founded on constitutional differences in the system, dependent on different physiological conditions. The periods of infancy, childhood, boyhood, adolescence, manhood, and old age, are distinguished from each other by external characters, which are but the outward signs of internal states. In physiological condition, the infant differs from the child, the child from the boy, the boy from the man, and the adult from the old man, as much in physical strength as in mental power. There is an appointed order in which these several states succeed each other; there is a fixed time at which one passes into another. That order cannot be inverted: no considerable anticipation or postponement of that fixed time can be effected. In all places and under all circumstances, at a given time, though not precisely at the same time in all climates and under all modes of life, infancy passes into

childhood, childhood into boyhood, boyhood into adolescence, and adolescence into manhood. In the space of two years from its birth, every infant has ceased to be an infant, and has become a child; in the space of six years from this period, every male child will have become a boy; add eight years to this time, and every boy will have become a young man; in eight years more, every young man will have become an adult man; and in the subsequent ten years, every adult man will have acquired his highest state of physical perfection. But at what period will this state of physical perfection decline? What is the maximum time during which it can retain its full vigour? Is that maximum fixed? Is there a certain number of years in which, by an inevitable law, every adult man necessarily becomes an old man? Is precisely the same number of years appointed for this transition to every human being? Can no care add to that number? Can no imprudence take from it? Does the physiological condition or the constitutional age of any two individuals ever advance to precisely the same point in precisely the same number of years? Physically and mentally, are not some persons older at fifty than others are at seventy? And do not instances occasionally occur in which an old man, who reaches even his hundredth year, retains as great a degree of juvenility as the majority of those who attain to eighty?

"If this be so, what follows? One of the most interesting consequences that can be presented to the human mind. The duration of the periods of infancy, childhood, boyhood, and adolescence, is fixed by a determinate number of years. Nothing can stay, nothing retard, the succession of each. Alike incapable of any material protraction is the period of old age. It follows that every year by which the term of human existence is extended is really added to the period of mature age; the period when the organs of the body have attained their full growth and put forth their full strength; when the physical organisation has acquired its utmost perfection; when the senses, the feelings, the emotions, the passions, the affections, are in the highest degree acute, intense, and varied; when the intellectual faculties, completely unfolded and developed, carry on their operations with the greatest vigour, soundness, and continuity; in a word, when the individual is capable of receiv-

ing and of communicating the largest amount of the highest kind of enjoyment.

"A consideration more full of encouragement, more animating, there cannot be. The extension of human life, in whatever mode and degree it may be possible to extend it, is the protraction of that portion of it, and only of that portion of it, in which the human being is capable of RECEIVING AND OF COMMUNICATING THE LARGEST MEASURE OF THE NOBLEST KIND OF ENJOYMENT."

Such a discovery makes a beautiful dislocation in the melancholy course of the reflections of the author of Ecclesiastes. To them we must now return, glad to find that every interruption, by the introduction of topics which are thus suggested in the course of our commentary, shows intimations of the world's progression, and of the provision for the growth of the human spirit towards its full maturity.

In the 2d verse of the 12th chapter he again describes old age as the winter of life. The summer of the regions in which he lived is serene and mild. The appearance of a cloud in the heavens is rare. When the autumnal rains come, although they fall heavily, still there are frequent and long intervals of brightness, refreshing intervals when vegetation is luxuriant, and when man's spirit is rendered more elastic by their bright contrast with the dreary time through which he has passed. But during the winter, although it be but a short one, the scene entirely changes; "the clouds return after the rain," and pour down deluge after deluge, bearing away before them the memorials of human art and the means of human enjoyment.

And now comes the passage from the 3d to the 6th verse, evidently loaded with Oriental metaphor—a passage which has sorely puzzled commentators, and given rise to the most different theories, each man taking the course of his own favourite studies: Palmer resolving the whole of it into allusions to the manners and customs of the East—and Mead into physical and anatomical allusions, even making Solomon acquainted minutely with the construction of the human frame and the circulation of the blood; while less systematic men, such as Priestley, freely confess their inability to elucidate the application of each particular image that is here introduced. Perhaps the best way would

be first to note the facts indicative of old age in the human frame. They are trembling of the head, "the keepers of the house shall tremble"—the bowing of the knees or of the back, "the strong men shall bow themselves"—the failure of the palate, and the loss of its discrimination, of its taste of food, "the grinders cease because they are few"—dimness of sight, "those that look out of the windows be darkened"—the closing and compression of the mouth and mumbling with the gums as in extreme old age, "and the doors shall be shut in the streets, when the sound of the grinding is low"—restlessness and starting at the smallest noises, the twittering of birds, the crowing of the cock, or even the note of the sparrow, "and he shall rise up at the voice of the bird"—the failure from enjoyment, perhaps, of the vocal powers or of the sense of hearing, "and all the daughters of music shall be brought low"—the sense of giddiness created by height, and the feeling of timidity in the crowded path, "also when they shall be afraid of that which is high, and fears shall be in the way"—the hoary head of age, "and the almond-tree" with its white blossoms "shall flourish"—weakness and exhaustion, dryness and shrivelling and bending of the frame, resembling the figure of the locust, "and the grasshopper shall be a burden"—the superseding of all the strong emotions, of all vivid sensations, "and desire shall fail"—the bearing away of the body to the grave, and the traversing of the streets, with clamorous multitudes throwing dust upon their heads and uttering their wails, as was the custom there, "because man goeth to his long home, and the mourners go about the streets"—the burial of the body with its royal adornments, the crown on its head and the silver belt or girdle round its waist, and the falling away of these as the body corrupts in the grave, until they are found there loose and broken, "or ever the silver cord be loosed, or the golden bowl" (rather, perhaps, the golden circle or diadem) "be broken." The Jews buried in gardens, they cultivated flowers around the tombs of those to whom they wished to pay homage; and if the necessary implements for supplying water for their gardens failed, all would soon fade and perish, and become a mere ruin, a desolation. This may be alluded to in the words, "or the pitcher be broken at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern."

Such I take to be the literal objects contemplated by the writer; and, notwithstanding the diversity of expositors, and their interminable discussions, yet I think we may trace —at least, I do so to my own satisfaction—a general idea in the similitudes which are here piled together. I noticed before how like a monarch, a conqueror, death comes into the mind of Solomon—how, when his black banner is advanced there, all the thoughts and feelings fly before it—how gloom is spread over every thing—how the notion of the conquest and of the complete subjugation of humanity, before the conception of death, is realised in another portion of this book. Something of this sort I take to be the leading idea here, and that the imagery is that of a palace, of a royal palace, of the palace of Solomon himself, as it would have been changed by the approach of a resistless enemy. The first effect would be the terror of the peaceful wardens of the palace, the porters of its gates, the watchmen on its walls—they would be startled, they would be terrified by this hostile incursion; "the keepers of the house" would "tremble." The next effect would be upon the military guard of the sovereign's person—their hearts are supposed to quail within them, even their sense of loyalty gives way to the resistless might with which they are encompassed—"the strong men bow themselves." Those who cater for the monarch's palate—and in the East they are remarkable for the countless different ways in which they prepare their viands—there are, at the present time, three hundred modes, I believe, of serving up rice, with as many different flavours —and although this might not be the common food in Solomon's time, yet, whatever it was, the same sort of artistry seems to have been introduced in their households and in their establishments, and would of course flourish much in their palaces—the cooks give up their occupation; it is no time for luxuries; "and the grinders cease because they are few." The women of the palace were indulged occasionally, according to Oriental indulgence, with a sight of what was passing in the streets of that metropolis; they are compelled to retire into the innermost parts of the building, that the windows might be closed for defence—"and those that look out of the windows be darkened." The portals of the palace would be closed, and guarded with great care—"and the doors shall be shut in the streets, when the sound of the

grinding is low :" there would be little even of the common preparation of food, which was ground in their own houses; every thing would bear the aspect of desolation. The monarch himself, in the centre of all this pride and pomp, now rendered so vain and inefficient, would start at the crowing of a cock as at the sound of a trumpet; and those who had been gathered together there to minister to his pleasures—those whose morning and evening song was gladness to his ear—their functions would cease, they would be dismissed. There would be the same sort of interruption, of change, of confusion, of universal inquietude, which is described in the 24th of Isaiah of the common houses under similar circumstances: "The new wine mourneth, the vine languisheth, all the merry-hearted do sigh. The mirth of tabrets ceaseth, the noise of them that rejoice endeth, the joy of the harp ceaseth. They shall not drink wine with a song; strong drink shall be bitter to them that drink it. The city of confusion is broken down: every house is shut up, that no man may come in." And it is supposed that this terror takes possession of Solomon, the aged monarch, who cannot climb to the turrets of his palace either for defence or to assail the enemy—who cannot rush out into "the way," into the public road, to beat them back—with whom the "almond-tree" is alone flourishing; it is all desolation besides: when that tree blossoms, no other blossoms, and the usual accompaniments of warfare, fear and starvation and gloom, are around; the earth is as if flights of locusts had passed over it, and stripped it of every green thing, and the "grasshopper" is a "burden;" and so the royal victim of this accumulating power, crushed and helpless, is borne "to his long home" from his temporary state, "and the mourners go about the streets."

Now, that there is here this implied allusion to a beleaguered city and an assaulted royal palace may be rendered perhaps more probable and clear, if we refer for a poetical antithesis to a delineation of a change in the opposite direction—from a state of war to one of quietude, of peace, and of enjoyment. In the commencement of the drama of *Richard the Third*, you will find almost every image which is here employed inverted, as it were,—used for the opposite purpose,—and made to indicate the transition from war to peace, instead of that from peace to warfare. That,

like this, begins with winter, as if there were some latent connection in a poetical mind between the season of winter and the state of warfare—between that of summer and one of peace:

> "Now is the winter of our discontent
> Made glorious summer by this sun of York;
> And all the clouds, that lowered upon our house,
> In the deep bosom of the ocean buried."

They did not, as in Ecclesiastes, return again after the rain, and darken the sun and moon and stars, and cover the earth with their hue. He goes on:

> "Now are our brows bound with victorious wreaths,
> Our bruisèd arms hung up for monuments,
> Our stern alarums changed to merry meetings,
> Our dreadful marches to delightful measures;
> Grim-visaged war hath smoothed his wrinkled front,"

and so on. Now, here you have in these two cases the contrast of "alarums" and of mirthful sounds—of the wrinkled front and of the smooth one—of monuments decaying through age, and of the warrior's armour making itself an enduring monument of conflict and of triumph: there is the baldness of head or white hair in the one case, and there is the laurel crown in the other. Every image of the modern poet is to be found in the ancient; they are used in the reversed order; they indicate, in the modern instance, indisputably the phenomena of a season of contest succeeded by one of peace; and I think the fair presumption is thus raised that, in the older writer, they indicate the transition from peacefulness to hostility.

I gave this as an antithetical illustration of the passage; but we may find a parallel and analogy, as well as an antithesis; and I believe that one important good is insured by commenting upon these ancient works, by references to the expression of feelings and sentiments which are analogous in modern times, and where we really find something like the soul of the one showing its existence in the other, but showing its existence according to the diversity of modern habits, manners, and mental associations.

The description of Ecclesiastes concludes with what I understand as the description of a tomb or burial-place

gone to ruin. The cistern is empty, the pitcher is broken. The body is crumbled into the dust; the golden circlet on its brow falls, breaks; the silver cord or girdle round its waist is loosened from the dissolving clay which it once held together; the whole scene, probably a garden (for such places they usually chose for sepulchres), is gone to wreck and desolation; and in the contemplation of this, the Jewish king and preacher winds up his description in a tone of deep melancholy; but that is not the necessary tone which becomes such a scene. There are—if not in this part of the island in which we live, there are in Scotland—antique burying-places, once rendered interesting and attractive by the sculptured monuments of kings and warriors, of priests and pontiffs. These places, like the Oriental ground of which Solomon speaks, have been in their turn neglected too—they have gone to a similar desolation; and thus it is that the poet Wordsworth speaks of such desolation :*

* * * * * * *
* * * * * * *

ending with a *Jubilate* of hope which the singing men and singing women of Solomon never made to resound in his ears. And yet he ends with something like anticipation. We have followed him through what I have already described as an eventful course. We must judge him according to his day. We must remember that he was great, greater even in his day than those who in a later period might arrive at knowledge; and if his scepticism exhibited itself as to the prolongation of man's existence, one reason was, that the doctrine of immortality taught in his day was one of the absurdest of doctrines. The Jews already had their notion of hades, of the world to come; but what a poor, what a pitiful, what a shadowy state!—that state in which Isaiah described kings as rising from their thrones to greet the tyrant of Babylon—that state of which the notion remained long enough among the Jews for Christ to derive from it the imagery employed in his parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus—that state from which the Jew or the Greek (for they both held something like the same idea

* The Editors regret their inability to find in Wordsworth's writings a passage exactly corresponding with the context above.

of hades) shrank with abhorrence, loth to lose sight of the bright sun, and of the green earth, and of all that made existence gladsome, in order to go to that cold and shadowy region. His mind recoiled from this. He could not and would not believe this; and, disbelieving it, he lost his hold on immortality. He was greater in that doubt than he would have been in the faith then presented to him; but groping his way still amid this darkness, this thick darkness that might be felt, we find him at last the old man—the poetical and reflective old man—the disappointed and embittered old man—the old man with whom priestly society had waged war, and who returned its warfare with correspondent energy, and sometimes almost with similar venom—the fretful old man, who looked back to youth as still coveting what was peculiar to it, and as impatient of his days of weakness and of darkness. At last, when he had brought the powers of his mind to bear upon the description of the accumulated miseries under which he regarded himself as sinking—when he contemplated the utter dissolution of the body, the scattering of the dust, and the crumbling away of the monument itself—he saw some intimation of hope, of bright expectancy, and in that he ended—"Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it."

So let him die. It was not for him to see farther. He thought the thoughts and did the work of his time—did them when he suffered, as well as when he laboured. The conception of immortality dawned not on him, as it did on later times—a conception that, like all great elementary moral principles, is self-evident—a conception of which the conviction is rather in itself than in any array of arguments—one that not merely has light thrown upon it, but that sheds light upon all things else, irradiating the whole circle of being. This was not for him. Though his soul might travail in the world, labouring for such a birth of faith and hope, he had to pass away; and long after, when the royal preacher's voice had been silenced for centuries, when the grandeur of his court, his guards, his sentries, his priests, and his regal visitants from foreign climes—when all of them had become but the shadow of a shade—when his very monument was only known by tradition—when, of his laboured writings, composed as they

probably were with so much care, the great majority had passed away, and been irrecoverably lost in oblivion—then, in that same region, the Son of the carpenter of Nazareth, speaking orally to the fishermen and to the peasants that surrounded him, redeemed the world by bringing life and immortality to light.

A Funereal Service

FOR

ELIZA FLOWER.

Sunday Morning, December 20, 1846.

SELECTIONS FROM HER SACRED MUSIC IN USE AT SOUTH-PLACE CHAPEL.

		HYMN
1.	Holy! holy! holy!	XXIII.
2.	See the leaves	LXVII.
3.	He sendeth sun, he sendeth shower .	CI.
4.	O Love, thou makest all things even .	LXIII.
5.	The Lord is my Shepherd . . .	CVII.
6.	In peace at once	CVIII.
7.	O pleasant life	CXXIV.
8.	While I do rest	XCIV.
9.	Darkness shrouded Calvary . . .	CXXXVI.
10.	The cloud-capped towers . . .	CXLIX.
11.	Death is the shadow of life . . .	CXLVIII.
12.	Part in peace	LXXXII.

A PRAYER.

God! with whom are the issues of life and death; whose are the sunshine and the darkness; who givest and takest away; and who, ever holy, wise, and good, art to be adored in all;—teach the heart to say, in filial submission and filial confidence, "Not our will, but thine be done."

All good is thy gift; and when the eye is quick to the

perception of beauty, and the ear attuned to the sense of melody, and the frame thrills responsively to Nature's harmonies, and reflection sounds the depths of moral truth, and fancy gilds reality with the gorgeousness of sunset clouds, and life has purpose and power, and its close leaves a long and hallowed twilight of remembrance,—it is thy gift! Thou art gracious to thy child; and in that, gracious to all upon whom comes the influence of thy bestowments.

And if the sensitiveness of enjoyment be also that of suffering; if the Cross and the Crown be still, as heretofore, associated; if devotion is doomed to be sacrifice, and desert martyrdom;—in this commingling there is mysterious harmony and latent unity; for thus deals thy Providence with those who make sunshine in the world's shady places; thus hast thou ever led nearer to thyself those whose spirits ascended the highest in their holy aspirations.

Let a consecrating influence be over every recollection, however distressful; every pang, however agonising. When those who sow in tears fail to reap in joy, may there come the later but richer harvest of extended and prolonged usefulness; may the grave be the nursery of truth and kindness, love and hope; may the narrow home appointed for all living be the school of life for its duties and charities, and reveal the real objects and purposes of existence. Let the tomb be the altar of purest and humblest worship, and the repose of death stimulate the activity of life to beneficent exertion.

Brief or lengthened as the continuance may be to any of us of that life which is but a span at most, may it prolong whatever the past has been, or known, of the true, the beautiful, and the good. The natural sympathy that links our days together—may it lose nothing worthy of continuity, but develop all the principles of spiritual life in their natural progressiveness, and towards their full maturity. May earth witness in the living the realised futurity which death seems to deny to its victims.

Thy noblest gifts, O God, are enduring. Seasons change, and years depart, and youth fades, and in earth's brightest blossoms there is a canker; the mightier powers of nature have their impress of mutability; the place of worlds knows them no more; but goodness is eternal: from its fountain in the human heart it spreads over all lands, and flows

through all ages, though that heart be sealed by death, and cold and senseless. It is of thine own nature, and unites that nature with ours. "Art thou not from everlasting to everlasting? O God! mine Holy One! WE SHALL NOT DIE."

God maketh his own best praise, and loveth it. The stars sing to thee in their courses; the day and the night praise thee; the music of gratitude is on all the earth and on all worlds; all tribes and nations, with varied rites, offer their homage. But in life and character, spiritual amid things material, and gushing forth in truthful fervency of expression, thine own spirit breathes again to thee. May the echo of such worship be prolonged, harmonising with the song of angels: "Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, and goodwill towards men." And whether separation be from each other, in such assemblages as this; from friends or relatives, in obedience to the calls of active life; from those dear to us, consigned to the silent grave; or from life itself, and time, and the world, with all its concerns,—still may we thus be enabled to "*Part in peace.*"

THE END.

In Memoriam.

William Johnson Fox was born near Wrentham, Suffolk, on the 1st of March 1786, at Uggleshall Farm, which was in the occupation of his aunt, and managed by his father.

After a few years, the farm being given up, his father removed to Norwich, and commenced business as a small manufacturer, in which his son William assisted him: hence his pseudonym, the "Norwich Weaver-Boy."

Not liking the manufacturing business, he obtained, through the aid of an uncle, a situation in the bank of Messrs. Kitt and Buck, where he remained several years, much to his own and his employers' satisfaction. During this period he continued his self-education with such assistance as he could procure in Norwich.

When about eighteen years of age, he felt a strong desire to become a Dissenting minister; and arrangements were made for him to enter Homerton College, under the Rev. John Pye Smith, D.D., where he remained from 1806 to 1809.

His first sermons (while a student) were preached in the chapel of the Haberdashers' Almshouses.

He became minister of a small orthodox congregation at Farnham, Hants, in 1809; adopting wider views of theology, he was followed by many of the congregation, and his services were continued in a second chapel, erected by the more advanced thinkers of the body.

He attended the meeting of the Southern Unitarian Asso-

ciation, held at Portsmouth in 1812, and delivered his maiden speech to an assembly of Unitarians.

In 1813 he published "Letters to the Rev. John Pye Smith, D.D., on the Sacrifice of Christ;" assailing, upon scriptural, historical, and moral grounds, the orthodox doctrines of atonement, satisfaction, &c.

In the same year he preached before the Southern Unitarian Association at Brighton the sermon on "The Comparative Tendency of Unitarianism and Calvinism to promote Love to God and Love to Man."

In March 1812 he became minister of the Presbyterian congregation at Chichester, with whom he remained five years. The tone of thought of this period is emphatically marked by the sermon on "Free Inquiry in Matters of Religion," preached at Salisbury, on the 28th June 1815, before the Southern Unitarian Association.

Mr. Fox's discourses having attracted much attention throughout the country, he received invitations from Liverpool, Birmingham, and London. Selecting the latter, he became the successor of Mr. Vidler, at Parliament-Court Chapel, in March 1817. The congregation rapidly increased, and the services were attended by many of the leading thinkers of the day. In 1819 he preached a sermon on the "Duties of Christians towards Deists," on the occasion of the prosecution of Mr. Carlile for the republication of Paine's *Age of Reason;* and in 1821, "A Funeral Sermon for Caroline, Queen of England."

The Parliament-Court congregation, requiring larger accommodation, built a new chapel in South Place, Finsbury, in which Mr. Fox delivered the opening sermon on 1st February 1824.

In 1831 he published forty sermons on "Christ and Christianity," followed by miscellaneous discourses; and by twenty sermons on "Christian Morality," in 1833.

About this period Mr. Fox abandoned the custom of taking a text for his discourses, and his views were more definitely expressed in opposition to a belief in the miraculous elements of Old and New Testament history. He also enlarged the range of pulpit topics; and about 1836, the date of his lectures on "Class Morality," he adopted *extempore* preaching. In 1839 he delivered a lecture on "The Moral View of the Corn-Law Question," and five remarkable lectures on "National Education," advocating principles which are now coming into practical recognition.

In 1842 the twenty-fifth year of his ministration was celebrated, when a purse of 400*l.* and a silver vase of the value of 60*l.* were presented to him by the congregation and friends.

The volume of sermons on "The Religious Ideas" was published in 1849; and his later discourses were chiefly devoted to the illustration and defence of the views therein expressed.

The last Lecture by Mr. Fox at Finsbury Chapel was delivered on February 8, 1852.

In 1820 he married Eliza Florance, daughter of James Florance, Esq., of Chichester, barrister-at-law, by whom he had three children,—Florance, Eliza (Mrs. Lee Bridell), and Franklin.

On September 28, 1843, he commenced the "Anti-Corn-Law Speeches," at the first meeting held in Covent-Garden Theatre by the League.

In 1847 he entered Parliament—returned, free of expense, at the head of the poll for Oldham, for which he sat till 1863.

On February 26, 1850, he introduced into Parliament "A Bill to promote the Secular Education of the People in England and Wales." His speech on this occasion made a great impression on the House of Commons, and was the first important effort to obtain the sanction of that body for an unsectarian scheme.

Among the practical efforts made by Mr. Fox for the educa-

tion of the people, was the delivery of a series of lectures addressed to "the working classes," at the National Hall, Holborn; commenced in 1845, and subsequently published in three volumes.

Mr. Fox's first appearance as a journalist was in 1821-2, when he wrote a series of articles in the *Norwich Mercury*, entitled the "Hyderabad Papers." This led to a connection with the *Sunday Times*, then under the management of D. W. Harvey: he subsequently wrote for the *True Sun*, the *Morning Chronicle*, the *Daily News* at its commencement, the *League* newspaper, and the *Weekly Dispatch*. To the *League* he contributed the "Norwich Weaver-Boy" Letters; to the *Dispatch*, a long series of articles, under the signature (previously adopted by another writer) of "Publicola;" and to the *Chronicle*, in addition to political articles, a series of dramatic criticisms.

In 1831 he purchased the *Monthly Repository* of the Unitarian Association, having previously been one of its editors; the first number under his sole management was published in the October of that year. Many of his best literary contributions appeared in this magazine; and in it he gave the earliest welcome to the rising genius of Tennyson and Browning. In 1836 he resigned the editorship to R. H. Horne. The *Retrospective Review*, the *Westminster Review*, &c., had also at various times the advantage of his coöperation.

Mr. Fox died on June 3, 1864, at 3 Sussex Place, Regent's Park, London, and was buried at Brompton Cemetery.

As the most fitting Memorial of his labours for the advancement of Truth and Liberty, these twelve volumes of his Works have been published by a Committee of those who knew his worth: they also placed a granite slab upon his grave.

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